JACK HAZARD SERIES

TROWBRIDGE

March 11/07.

Jeffrey
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To George Jeffrey

From

Papa and Mamma.

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THE PARTING.

FAST FRIENDS.

BY

J. T. TROWBRIDGE,

AUTHOR OF "JACK HAZARD AND HIS FORTUNES," ETC.

THE JOHN C. WINSTON CO.
PHILADELPHIA
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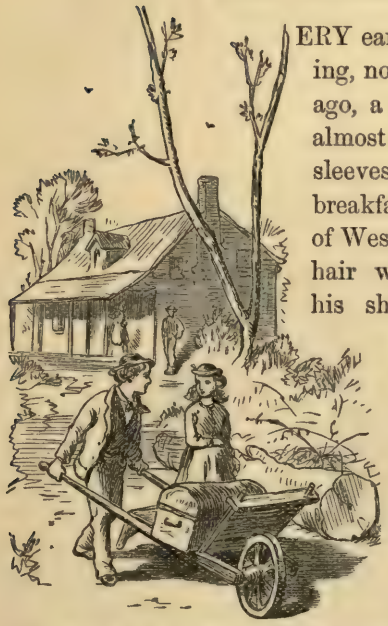
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FAST FRIENDS.

CHAPTER I.

A YOUNG CONTRIBUTOR.



VERY early one spring morning, not quite thirty years ago, a tall boy, with arms almost too long for his coat-sleeves, sat eating a hasty breakfast in a farm-house of Western New York. His hair was freshly combed, his shirt-collar clean, his fair face smoothly shaved (or perhaps the beard was yet to grow), and he appeared dressed for a journey.

By the table, leaning her elbow upon it, sat a young girl, who did not eat, but watched him wistfully.

"George," said she, with a tremulous smile, "you 'll forget me as soon as you are gone."

George looked up, over his plate of fried potatoes, and saw her eyes — a bright blue, and smiling still — grow very misty indeed, and suddenly let fall a shining drop or two, like rain in sunshine. She caught up her apron, dashed away the tears with a laugh (she must either laugh or cry, and laughing was so much more sensible), and said, "I know you will, George!"

"Don't think that, Vinnie!" said George, earnestly. "You are the only person or thing on this old place that I don't wish to forget."

"I am sorry you feel so, George!"

"I can't help it. I've nothing against *them*, — only they don't understand me. Nobody understands me, or knows anything of what I think or feel."

"Don't I — a little?" smiled Vinnie.

"You, more than anybody else. And, Vinnie!" exclaimed George, "I do hate to leave you here!"

He gazed at her, thinking how good, how beautiful, she was. On the table there was a candle still burning with a pale flame. Just then a broad-chested, half-dressed farmer came in from another room, yawning, and buttoning his suspenders, saw the candle, and put it out.

"Need n't burn candles by daylight," he said, pinching the wick and then wiping his fingers on his uncombed hair.

George watched the broad back with the suspenders, knit of yellow yarn, crossed over a blue flannel

shirt, going out at the back door, and looked grimly sarcastic.

"That's his way; he don't mean anything; he's good-hearted behind it all," Vinnie explained. "Eat a doughnut."

George declined the doughnut, and sat back in his chair. "I can't help laughing! Nine years I've lived with him, — my uncle, my mother's only brother: he sees me ready for a journey, my trunk packed; and nobody knows, not even myself, just where I am going, or how I am going to live; and his first words are, 'Need n't burn candles by daylight.' Candles!" repeated George, contemptuously.

The uncle walked a little way from the back door, stopped, hesitated, and then walked back again. A trunk was there, loaded up on an old wheelbarrow.

"Ye might have had the horse and wagon, George, to take your trunk down," he said.

"Uncle Presbit," George answered, with a full heart, "I'm obliged to you; but you did n't say so last night, when I spoke about it."

That was too true. Uncle Presbit gazed rather uneasily at the trunk for a moment, then slowly revolved on his axis, and the yellow X on the blue back moved off again.

"I wish you would take my money!" Vinnie then said in a low tone of entreaty. "You will need it, I am sure."

"I hope not," replied George. "I've enough to take me to Albany or New York, and keep me there

a few days. I shall find something to do. I sha' n't starve. Never fear."

"But promise you 'll write to me for my money, if you need it. You know you will be welcome to it, — more than welcome, George!"

At that moment the uncle reappeared at the door. He was a plain, coarse man, with a rather hard but honest face, and he looked not unkindly on George.

"When ye spoke last night," he said, "I hoped ye 'd reconsider. 'T ain't too late to change yer mind now, ye know. Had n't ye better stay? Bird in the hand 's wuth two in the bush. It 's a dreffle onsartin thing, this goin' off to a city where nobody knows ye nor cares for ye, to seek yer fortin."

"It 's uncertain, I know," replied George, with a resolute air; "but I 've made up my mind."

"Wal! boys know more 'n their elders now'days." And once more the uncle walked heavily and thoughtfully away, scratching his rough head.

"George," whispered Vinnie, "if you print anything in the city papers, be sure to send me a copy."

"Of course," — blushing and stammering a little, — "if I do."

She had touched a sensitive chord in the boy's heart, which thrilled with I know not what secret aspirations. For George was a poet, — or dreamed he was. In the heart of that farm-bred, verdant youth lurked a romantic hope, shy as any delicate wild-flower shrinking from the glare of day under the shade of some secluded rock. He would hardly

have owned, even to himself, that it was there. To be a poet, — to write what the world would delight to read, — to become famous, like Byron, Burns, or Scott, whom he so passionately admired, — O no! he would have declared, he was not so foolish as to indulge that daring thought.

And yet he had tried his powers. He had composed a great many rhymes while following the plough or hoeing his uncle's corn, and had written a few prose sketches. Some of these things had got into print, and given him a good deal of reputation as a "young contributor" to the county newspaper. The editor had more than once called attention to the "new poem by our promising young author, G. G." (for George Greenwood favored the public with his initials only), comparing him with Pope in his early years, or with Chatterton, "the marvellous boy." George was rather ashamed of these compliments, which he greatly feared laid him open to ridicule. He suspected, moreover, perhaps justly, that they were intended as a sort of compensation for his articles; for he got no other pay. Besides, he had a painful consciousness that the "Vanguard of Freedom" was not literature, and that its columns were not the place where laurels were to be won.

His friends and mates, for the most part, took no interest in his verses. Some accused him of "copying out of Lord Byron." Two or three only — including Vinnie — believed in him. His Uncle Presbit owned that "the boy had a knack at rhymin'," and

was rather proud of it; — no one of his blood had ever before written anything which an editor had thought "wuth printin' in a paper." But though he did not object to a little such nonsense now and then, hard work on the farm was the business of life with him, and he meant it should be so with his nephew, as long as they lived together. And hard enough he made it — hard, dry, and prosaic — to George, with his sensitive nature and poetic dreams. And so it happened that George's trunk was out there on the wheelbarrow, packed with all his earthly possessions (including a thick roll of manuscripts), and that he was eating in haste the breakfast which Vinnie had got for him, early that spring morning.

"I was agoin' to say," remarked Uncle Presbit, again coming back to the door, "I don't mind payin' ye wages, if ye stay an' work for me this season."

"Thank you for the offer, — though it comes rather late!" said George gloomily. "Good by, Aunt Presbit; you're just in time to see me off."

The aunt came in, with pins in her mouth, arranging her dress.

"Goin'? Have ye had a good breakfast?" she said, speaking out of the corner of her mouth, that was free from pins.

"Yes, thanks to Vinnie," said George, risen and ready to start.

"That means, no thanks to me. Wal, George!" — the pins were out of the mouth, which smiled in

a large, coarse, good-natured way, — "I mean better by ye'n ye think; the trouble is, ye've got too fine notions for plain folks like us. All is, if ye git into trouble, jest come back here; then mabby ye'll find who yer re'l friends be."

George was touched by this, and there was a tear in his eye as he shook her hand at parting.

"But law!" she added, with broad irony, "if ever ye do come back, I s'pose ye'll be a rich man, and too proud to speak to poor folks! Why don't ye kiss him, Vinnie? Need n't mind me!"

"She is going over to the bridge with me." And George took up the handles of the wheelbarrow on which his trunk was placed.

Uncle Presbit, who had walked to and fro half a dozen times since he last appeared at the door, now came back and spoke what was on his mind.

"George," — a cough, — "I s'pose," — another cough, — Uncle Presbit pulled off his old farm hat with one hand, and scratched his head with the other, — "no doubt ye think I might 'a' gin ye some money —"

"Uncle Presbit," said George, putting down the wheelbarrow, "if the work I've done for you the past nine years has paid for my board and clothes and schooling," — his voice trembled a little, — "I'm glad — and I'm satisfied. If you had offered me money, I — I" — chokingly — "should have taken it as a kindness; but I have n't expected it, and I don't know that I have deserved it."

Uncle Presbit had put his hand into his pocket, but he now took it out again, and appeared greatly relieved.

"Wal! I d' n' know, George! I've meant to do right by ye. An' I wish ye well, I shall allers wish ye well, George. Good by."

"Good by," said George. He repressed a bitter sob; and, with his hat pulled over his eyes, taking up the barrow again, he wheeled it away, while Vinnie walked sadly by his side.

CHAPTER II.

TAKING THE PACKET BOAT.

NOTWITHSTANDING the distasteful life he had led at his uncle's, George did not leave the old place without some parting sighs. Strangely mingled with his hatred of such disagreeable work as forking manure and picking up stones, and of his uncle's sordid ways, remained a genuine love of nature, and attachment to many a favorite spot. How could he forget the orchard, so pleasant in summer weather; the great woods where he had roamed and dreamed; the swallow-haunted and hay-scented barn; the door-yard, where on Sunday afternoons he had lain upon the grass and gazed up into the sky, with thoughts of time and space and God; and all the private paths and nooks which Vinnie and he had known together?

"I take back what I said about wishing to forget everybody and everything but you, Vinnie!" he said, setting down his load at a little distance from the house, and looking back. "Shall I ever see again that old roof, — those trees, — this road I have travelled so many times with you on our way to school?"

"I hope so, George!" said Vinnie, fervently.

"Where shall I be a year from now? — three —

five — ten years?" he continued, as if speaking aloud the thoughts which had been haunting him. "I wonder if this is n't all a dream, Vinnie!"

"I should think the wheelbarrow would seem real enough to you," she said with a tearful smile, as he took up his load again.

"Yes! and is n't this a rather ridiculous way of leaving home?" George blushed as he thought how it would sound, in the fine Byronic "Farewell" he was composing, or in the biography which might some day be written: "On that occasion he conveyed his own luggage to the boat, using for the purpose an ancient wheelbarrow belonging to his uncle." It was long before George got that little streak of romantic vanity rubbed out of him by rude contact with the world.

The road soon brought them to the bridge; and under the bridge flowed (for there was always a sluggish current) the waters of the canal, on which he was to embark. He saw the rising sun under the bridge, as he set down the wheelbarrow by the towpath, and removed the trunk. Vinnie was to take the "little vehicle" (so it was called in the "Farewell") back with her, after they had parted.

"I 've jumped off from that bridge, on to the boats passing under, more times than I ever shall again, Vinnie!" He remembered the way in which the little sum of money in his pocket had been earned, and wondered how that would read in his biography: "He had diligently picked up a few pennies at odd

spells, by gathering in his uncle's orchard such fruits as it chanced to afford, and selling them on the canal-boats, upon which he stepped from a convenient bridge." Such things would dart through the lad's too active brain even at that moment of parting.

They sat down, she on the trunk and he on the wheelbarrow, and talked a little; though their hearts were so full, neither had much to say. George cast anxious glances up the canal; suddenly he exclaimed, in a quick voice, "There's the packet!" and clasped her hand. It was the boat that was to bear him away. The foremost of the three heavily trotting horses, and the head of the driver riding the last, appeared around the bend; then came the long, curving tow-line, and the trim, narrow prow cutting the water. George, who had many times leaped upon the same boat at that place, with his little basket of apples (it was only upon the line-boats that he stepped from the bridge), sprang up and gave a signal. The driver — who knew him, and remembered many a fine pippin handed up to him as he rode past, with the request, "Drive slow!" — slackened speed, letting the tow-line dip and trail in the water. The steersman, who also knew George, saw the signal and the trunk, and headed the packet for the tow-path. As it was "laying-up" for him, George hastily bid Vinnie good by; then, as the stern swung in and rubbed gratingly against the bank, he caught up his trunk, threw it aboard, and then leaped after it. The stern swung off again, the

driver cracked his whip, the dripping line straightened, and a swiftly widening space of dingy water separated George standing in the stern from Vinnie on the shore.

There was something romantic, after all, in his departure, sailing into the sunrise, which dazzled her as she gazed after him under her uplifted arm. He stood proudly erect, waving his hat towards her; she fluttered her handkerchief; then another bend shut him out from her view.

Poor Vinnie, standing alone on the tow-path, with the empty wheelbarrow, continued to gaze after him long after he was out of sight. A dreadful feeling of loss and desolation came over her, and the tears streamed unheeded down her cheeks. For nine years — ever since, his parents having died, he came to live with his uncle — they had been daily companions. She too was an orphan, adopted in childhood by the Presbits, who had no children of their own; and the two had grown up together like brother and sister. How empty life would seem without him! how could she endure it? But Vinnie was too brave a girl to spend much time in mourning over the separation.

"I must go home and get breakfast for the rest," she suddenly remembered. So, drying her eyes, she took up the wheelbarrow, and trundled it back along the road.

George felt the separation less; for he had the novelty of the journey and his own fresh hopes to

divert and console him. It was early in the month of May; the morning was cool and fine. The sun rose through crimson bars of cloud into a sky of transparent silver. Birds sang sweetly in the budding boughs that overhung the water; the lisp of ripples by the rushing prow blended with their songs. The steady, level movement of the boat, bearing him away to new scenes and new fortunes, inspired him with emotions akin to happiness. And he had his poem for a companion. His brain began to beat with rhymes.

> "When the beams of morning fell
> On my little vehicle,
> Which by dewy hedge-rows bore
> My light luggage to the shore,
> She, still faithful, by my side,
> Rosy-cheeked, and tender-eyed — "

But George immediately rejected the epithet "rosy-cheeked," as out of keeping with the pathos of the parting scene and the passionate tone of the "Farewell." Indeed, none of the lines composed that morning were finally retained in that remarkable poem, which was pitched to the deep key of the surging winds in the dark woods, where he had nursed his fate-defying thoughts (after his trunk was packed) the night before.

CHAPTER III.

THE "OTHER BOY."

FINDING that the stream of poetry ran shallow, George looked about among the passengers who were beginning to come on deck, and noticed a monstrously fat man whose bulk nearly filled the companion-way where he stood.

"Half a dozen of us little fellows will have to go forward, to trim the boat, if he stays aft," said a boyish voice at George's side.

The speaker was a lad almost a head shorter than himself, and maybe a year or two younger, but with a bright, honest face, which expressed a good deal of quiet self-reliance and firmness of character. George, who had seen little of the world, and who lacked self-reliance, felt drawn at once to the owner of that face.

Perceiving that he wore pretty good clothes, and a coat which was not a bad fit, our young poet, who was troubled with a painful consciousness of having outgrown his own garments, instinctively pulled down his coat-sleeves, which, as has been said, were short.

"He 'd better not come up on deck," he replied in the same tone of pleasantry. "He 'd go through these thin boards like an elephant!"

The lad — whom we shall call the Other Boy — began to laugh. "Once when I was on the canal," he said, "I saw just such a fat man on the deck of a line-boat, as it was coming to a bridge. 'Low bridge!' says the steersman. It *was* a low bridge, — very low; and the boat, having no freight, was very high out of the water. The fat man got down and lay on his back, with his feet towards the bow. But, gracious! he reached almost as far up into the sky when he was lying down as when he stood up. He saw the bridge coming, in a direction that was certain to cut him off about six inches below his waistcoat buttons. I was on the tow-path; and I screamed, 'Mister! mister! you'll get killed!' He knew it, but what could he do? The boat could n't stop, and the bridge would n't go! In a minute he would be crushed like a four-hundred-pound egg."

"What *did* he do?" said George.

"There was only one thing he *could* do; for it was too late to get up and run aft, and he could n't crawl away. He put up his feet! I suppose he thought he was going to stop the boat, or maybe push the bridge over. But the bridge pushed him! It was funny to see his eyes stick out, and hear him roar, 'Hold on! wait! stop 'em!' — I suppose he meant the horses, — as he slid along on the deck, and finally rolled off into the water. He went in like a whale, — such a splash! He was so fat he could n't sink; but how he did splutter and blow canal water when he came out!"

The Other Boy had hardly finished his story, when "Bridge!" called the man at the helm; and both boys, laughing heartily, got down on the deck, with the other passengers, to pass under.

George's new acquaintance appeared to be familiar with life on the canal, and had several such stories to tell. George, in his turn, became confidential.

"I used to peddle apples on the 'big ditch,' as we call it," he said, as they sat on some light baggage on the deck, and looked off at the passing scenery. "They were my uncle's apples, and I gave him half I got for them. That made him willing to let me have the fruit, and a half-day to myself now and then. I would drop on to the line-boats from the bridge, and — if the steersman would n't lay up for me — get off at the next bridge, or on another boat. I was a little chap when I began, — very timid, — and it was some time before I completely mastered the art of getting on and off. You see, it don't do to jump down on the side from which the boat is coming, for the bridge might knock you over before you could take care of yourself. So you look for a good place, where there 's no freight or passengers, and then run to the other side, and wait till the spot you 've picked out comes through, and then drop down, and you 're all right."

"Yes, I see," said the Other Boy.

"Once I dropped down in such a hurry that I left my basket of apples on the bridge! I got well

laughed at; and, what was worse," said George, "when I went back, half an hour later, — for the steersman would n't lay up, since I could n't give him an apple, and I had to jump to the first boat we met, — the pigs had eaten up all my apples, except a few which I found afloat with the basket in the canal. Another time I put my basket up on a bridge, but could n't get up myself. I thought I could, though, and I hung on, jumping and kicking



GEORGE'S LITTLE ADVENTURE.

in the air, while the boat passed from under me, and there I clung, right over the water. The boatmen only laughed at me. There was nobody to pull me up, — yelling did no good, — and I could n't very well hold on till another boat came along, with a good deck for me to fall on."

"What did you do?" asked the Other Boy, highly amused.

"I dropped into the water. Luckily I could swim, and I got out without assistance. The boatmen laughed louder than ever, when they saw me, and that hurt my feelings."

"Just like 'em! they 're pretty rough fellows, the most of 'em!" said the Other Boy, with the air of one who knew.

"On one boat," George continued, "I met with a series of accidents. In the first place, getting on, I was a moment late, and, instead of alighting where I expected, I jumped into the stomach of a big Dutchman lying on the deck, smoking his pipe. He started up with a grunting 'Hough! hough!' — very much as if it had been a fat hog I had jumped on, — and away went I and my apples. First I picked myself up, and then proceeded to pick up as many of my apples as had n't rolled overboard. Afterwards I gave all I saved, together with all my money, for a bill that turned out to be counterfeit. Then the steersman carried me off. Then, in getting up on a bridge, — you have to step along on the deck, you know, till you can give a good jump, and you can't

see where you step, — I kicked a dinner-bell off into the water. The cook sprang to catch me by the legs, and came very near going overboard after his bell. I was too quick for him; but I was no sooner on the bridge than a shower of turnips followed me. I think the enraged cook, the steersman, and the deck hands must have thrown away half a barrel of turnips, all on my account. They went under the bridge, and over the bridge, and hit the bridge, but not one hit the mark they were aimed at, if I except a few lively spatters of juice and mashed pulp from one or two that struck the timbers disagreeably near to my head. As soon as I was at a good dodging distance, I yelled to the steersman that he'd better lay up for me next time. But I was careful never to get on that boat again."

The Other Boy showed a lively appreciation of these anecdotes. "Are you a pretty good hand at getting into scrapes?" he inquired, with a laugh, looking up into George's face.

"Fair," replied George. "Are you?"

"Terrible!" said the Other Boy. "You never saw such a fellow. If you are like me, we'd better not be together much, or nobody knows what may happen. Two Jonahs in one boat!"

"But do you get out of your scrapes?" asked George.

"O yes! that's the fun of it."

"Then I'll risk you. But how happens it that you know so much about the canal?"

"I was brought up on it," said the Other Boy.

"You mean near it — on its banks?"

"No; on the canal itself," — with a quiet smile. "You see, I was a driver once."

George was astonished. "You! I should n't have thought it!"

"It seems odd to me now," said the Other Boy, looking thoughtful for a moment. "I can hardly believe that, only two years ago, I was travelling this very tow-path, one of the roughest little drivers you ever saw!"

"You must have had a streak of luck!" George suggested, regarding his new acquaintance with fresh interest.

"I've had some good friends!" said the Other Boy.

"How far are you going?"

"To New York."

George started, and drew still nearer the Other Boy. "To stay?"

"I don't know. I am going on a strange sort of business; I mean to stay till I've finished that."

"*I* am going to New York," then said George.

"Good!" exclaimed the Other Boy. "Let's go there together."

CHAPTER IV.

THE JOURNEY AND AN ADVENTURE.

THAT afternoon they arrived at Syracuse, where they changed boats, taking another packet for Utica. They slept on board that night, in little berths made up against the sides of the narrow cabin, much like the berths in a modern sleeping-car. Changing boats again the next day at Utica, they continued their journey, passing through the Mohawk Valley, and found themselves in Schenectady on the following morning.

This was the end of the packet's route; and here, after breakfast, they took the cars for Troy and Albany, over one of the oldest railroads in the country. It was a new experience to the two boys, neither of whom had ever ridden in a railroad car before. This, we must remember, was nearly thirty years ago; since which time passenger-boats, once so common on the canal, have disappeared, and become almost forgotten.

At noon they arrived at Albany; and there George wished to spend a couple of days, while the Other Boy, who had seen enough of the city when he was a driver, and whose business seemed urgent, was for taking a steamer down the Hudson that night.

Finally George agreed that, if his new friend would stay with him in Albany until the next morning, he would then take the steamer with him, and they would go down the river by daylight.

They saw the city that afternoon, — the Other Boy acting as guide, — slept at a cheap public house, and got up early the next morning in order to take the boat.

There were two lines of New York steamers at that time, "running opposition"; and when the boys reached the wharf they were beset by runners for the rival lines, who caught hold of them, jabbering, and dragging them this way and that, in a manner which quite confused George, until he saw how cool and self-possessed the Other Boy was.

"See here!" cried the latter, sharply, "just keep your hands off! Let go that trunk, I say!" It was George's trunk; his friend had only a valise. "Now, what will you take us for?"

"Regular fare, dollar and a half," said one; "take ye for a dollar."

"Go on our boat for seventy-five cents!" shouted the other.

"Half a dollar!" roared the first.

"A quarter!" shrieked the second.

"All right," said the Other Boy. "We can't do better than that; — although," he added afterwards, "if we had kept the two fellows bidding against each other a little longer, no doubt one of 'em would have given us something for going in his boat!"

They had got their baggage safely aboard, and were standing near the gangway, amid a group of passengers, when somebody said, "What 's the matter with that man?" George turned, and saw a well-dressed person staggering towards them, holding one hand to his head, and reaching out convulsively with the other, on which (he remembered afterwards) glittered a diamond ring.

"Take me!" gasped the man. "I shall fall!"

While George, struck with astonishment, hesitated a moment, not for want of humanity, but because he lacked decision, the Other Boy sprang promptly to support the stranger.

"Help!" said he. "I can't hold him!" And in an instant George was at the stranger's other side. The man reeled about frightfully, and finally leaned his whole weight upon the boys, his body swaying, and his arms clutching their sides. At the same time two other gentlemen crowded close to them, crying, "What ails him?"

"I don't know," said the Other Boy. "Ease him down on the trunks here."

"No, no!" gasped out the suffering gentleman. "Take me ashore! I'm not going in the boat. I shall be all right."

As he appeared to recover himself a little, declaring presently that his faintness had passed, and that he could walk, the two boys helped him to the wharf, where he thanked them warmly for their kindness. They left him leaning against a cab, and had just

time to leap aboard again when the bridge was hauled in, the great paddles began to revolve, and the boat started.

"He's all right," cried the Other Boy, with satisfaction. "Just think, he might have got carried off! Now, where's the man who promised to get us our tickets?"

"See here!" said George, feeling in his pocket, "pay for mine when you get yours, will you?" For George shrank from the responsibility of pushing into the crowd and making change.

"All right," said the Other Boy. "What's the matter with *you?*"

George stood, a picture of consternation, feeling first in one pocket, then in another, then in both.

"My pocket-book!" he said hoarsely.

The Other Boy comprehended the situation at once, and, thrusting his hands into his own pockets, became another picture of consternation, to match his friend.

"My purse! That rascal!" he cried, springing to the gangway.

He looked for the sick man leaning by the cab. He had disappeared. The steamer was already forty yards from the wharf. And there were our two youthful adventurers, embarked for the great unknown city in a crowd of passengers among whom they had not a friend, and without money enough about them to pay their fares even at "opposition" rates.

CHAPTER V.

"A BAD FIX."

"LET us off! put us ashore!" cried George, rushing hither and thither. "Where 's the captain of this boat?" he shouted, furiously.

"Hush your noise!" said the Other Boy, catching him by the coat-tail, and trying to hold him. "Be quiet, I tell you."

"Be quiet? when that pickpocket has got my money?" George retorted, with uncontrollable excitement. "I can't go to New York without money!"

"You can't go ashore either," said the Other Boy.

"I will, if I have to swim!"

"And leave your trunk aboard?"

George had n't thought of his trunk. "But I 'm ruined!"

"So am I," said the Other Boy, with a self-mastery quite in contrast with George's agitation. "But what 's the use of making a ridiculous fuss? Don't you see everybody 's laughing at us?"

There was too much truth in that. Not that the spectators were heartless; but, really, the aspect of our tall young poet rushing wildly about, bewailing his loss, shrieking for the captain, and demanding in an agony of despair to be put ashore, — his hat fallen

back on his head, his hair tumbled, and his hands stretching far out of his short coat-sleeves, — was too ludicrous not to move the mirth of the most sympathizing breast.

George, perceiving the justness of the remark, and being sensitive to ridicule, calmed himself a little.

"But what *shall* we do?" he implored.

"That's more than I know!" replied the Other Boy, despairingly; "but tearing around in this fashion won't help matters. You can't expect the steamboat will put back just to land us! And I would n't go back if I could."

"Why not?"

"What would be the use? There would n't be one chance in a thousand of getting our money again, even if we should catch the pickpocket."

"The youngster is right," said a plain old gentleman, who had been carefully observing the boys.

"The two men who crowded so close to you when you were holding the one in a fit, were probably his accomplices. You noticed they stayed ashore too, did n't you? There's no knowing which of 'em took your money, or which has it now. It's probably divided by this time. The fit was, of course, a sham, a trick to lay hold of you, and get at your pockets."

"I had twenty-nine dollars!" said George, in doleful accents, remembering how long he had been laying up that little sum, which seemed so large a sum to him.

"And I had forty!" said the Other Boy, ruefully;

"it was all I could scrape together for my journey. Now, what I am going to do, I don't know any more than you do. But I'd rather be in New York than in Albany. There's a better chance of finding something to do there. Besides, that's where *my* business is, at any rate."

George began to recover his spirits. Perhaps he remembered the manuscripts in his trunk.

"But," he objected, "*I* have n't a cent! I can't even pay my passage!"

"Nor I. And I don't believe the clerk will be so unreasonable as to expect us to, when he knows the circumstances. The best way will be to go straight to the office and tell him."

George agreed that that would be the most frank and honorable course. But first they looked for a man to whom the runner had introduced them, and who had engaged that they should have their tickets at the reduced rates. In searching for him they learned that tickets were selling to everybody at twenty-five cents, "for that day only"; so they concluded to go without him.

There was a large crowd pressing towards the office, and it was some time before they, in their turn, arrived at the window.

"Twenty-five cents," said the clerk, who stood ready to shove them their tickets, and sweep back their money.

"We have had our pockets picked," said the Other Boy.

"Just as the boat left the wharf," added George, over his shoulder.

"Twenty-five cents!" repeated the clerk, firmly. "If you haven't any money, pass along, and make room for them that have."

"But," the Other Boy remonstrated, "we have been robbed, and we thought certainly — "

"How many?" said the clerk to the next comer. "Four tickets, one dollar." And he pushed out the tickets, and drew in the dollar, then attended to the next man. He appeared to have no more feeling for our unlucky boys than if he had been a machine.

"Never mind!" said the Other Boy, with a stern smile, his face slightly flushed. "It's a bad fix; but we are bound for New York!"

George's face was very much flushed. His feet were cold as ice. All his vital forces seemed to have rushed to his head to see what the matter was, and to press their assistance at an alarming crisis. It was like an impetuous crowd of citizens rushing to defend a breach in the walls, where a handful of disciplined troops would render much better service. Such excessive excitability is, no doubt, a defect of character, until it has been mastered by a wise head and firm will, when what was before a source of weakness becomes an element of strength.

George envied his companion the self-control he was able to preserve on such an occasion; and he remembered, with shame, some too valorous lines in his "Farewell."

"Fare thee well, thou mighty forest!
While with battling winds thou warrest,
Forth my storm-defying vessel
(Ribs of kindred oak) I steer,
With the gales of fate to wrestle,
As thou strivest with them here!

"Let the tempest drive and pour!
Let the thunders rave and roar!
Let the black vault yawn above,
Lightning riven!
Naught my steadfast star shall move
From its heaven!"

Thus he had written, and thus he had felt (or fancied he felt), the night before his departure from home. And now, here he was, thrown into a flurry of excitement by the loss of a paltry pocket-book!

"We may as well take it easy," said the Other Boy; and they went forward to some piles of rope at the bow, where they ensconced themselves, and sat watching the bright waters rushing past, and the scenery on the shores, and talked over the situation. "Now, let's look this thing square in the face, and see just what our prospects are, and if there is any way out of the scrape."

George replied that he could not see any possible way out.

"You've the advantage over me," said the Other Boy. "You're going to the city to stay, — to earn money. I wasn't intending to stop there long. I expected to spend money, — not to earn any. And now I haven't a dime to spend! You see, I'm in an awful scrape."

"You are; that's a fact!" said George, sympathetically, yet secretly comforted by the thought that his own bad luck was not the worst. And he added, "We ought to stick together, anyhow, and help each other if we can."

"I'm not the fellow to say no to that!" laughed the Other Boy. "I promise to stand by you as long as you'll stand by me."

"Then we are fast friends," exclaimed George, warmly. "Whatever comes, — good luck or bad luck, — we'll suffer and share alike, if you say so."

And having made this compact, both boys felt their hearts lightened. Not only does misery love company, but our courage to confront a frowning and uncertain future is more than doubled by the trust inspired by a friend at our side.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW THE BOYS PAID THEIR FARE.

WHILE they were talking, a stout man, with an official air, came along and asked if they were the fellows who could n't pay their fare.

"We had our pockets picked just as we came aboard," began George, "and we have n't any money; and we —"

"I know the rest," interrupted the man: "you need n't tell it."

"You saw the operation?" said George, eagerly.

"No. But I've heard the story rather too many times; no danger of my forgetting it!"

"From the passengers?" said George, who, simple-hearted and inexperienced, was too much inclined to take every sober man's word in earnest. But the Other Boy detected sarcasm in the man's cold tone of voice.

"From just such fellows as you," replied the man. "It's a fine excuse for shirking your fares, — you've lost your money, or had your pockets picked, — the same thing; one story's as good as another; and neither will go down with me."

George looked aghast; while the Other Boy spoke up quickly, —

"Plenty of people saw the pickpockets take our money; and if you don't believe us —"

"I'll believe *you* as soon as I'll believe a man who says he saw a pickpocket take your money, and did n't report him on the spot. He 's no better than a pickpocket himself."

The boys felt the force of this argument; and, indeed, how could any spectator know that they had not been playing a game, in order to make it appear that they were robbed? Although one must have allowed that, at least, George's consternation at his loss was either very real, or very well acted indeed.

"We tell you the truth!" said George, with a sincerity that ought to have been convincing.

"And if you won't believe us, or those persons who saw the whole affair," added his companion, falling back upon a certain stubbornness, and defiance of the worst, which were marked traits in his character, "I don't know what you 'll do about it."

"That 's simple enough," replied the man. "You pay your fares or you 'll be put ashore at the next landing." He turned away, but paused, and added in the same business-like tone, "You 've no baggage, of course."

"Yes, we have baggage," said George.

The man appeared a little suprised. No doubt it was unusual for such tricksters as he took them for to be encumbered with luggage, but he did not relent.

"You 'd better get it ready," he said. "You 'll be put off at Hudson, and you won't want to go without your traps."

"This is lovely!" said the Other Boy, knitting his brows and compressing his lips, while his companion was simply confounded.

"We don't want to be left at Hudson, or any other place!" George said, pale with alarm.

"Only twenty-five cents! Just think of it!" exclaimed the Other Boy, with a laugh which did not have an overflowing amount of mirth in it. "That's too absurd! They never'll do it!"

"I'm afraid they will! Why not?" asked George.

"They'll threaten us, to make us fork over our fares if we have any money, of course; but when they find we haven't, they can't be so mean! Besides, the passengers who saw the affair will interfere. I'm not going ashore at Hudson! Come! we'll find some of them. There's that old gentleman!"

He was the same who had spoken to the boys before. He now listened kindly to their story, and said, —

"No, I don't think they will really put you off the boat; but you can't blame them for being a little suspicious of you, there are so many rogues trying all the while to cheat them out of their fares."

"And so we, who are innocent, must suffer because there are impostors!" exclaimed George, indignantly.

"Yes, that's the way it works. If everybody was honest," said the old gentleman, "then we should have no cause to lock our doors or shut our ears to the appeals of the unfortunate. So you see how uncomfortable liars and knaves make the world for us.

But I think I know honest boys when I see them, and I am satisfied you tell the truth. It's a small matter, and I may save you some trouble by lending you the amount of your fares."

"Oh!" said both boys at once.

The old gentleman handed them half a dollar, saying, "Now you need n't give yourselves any trouble about it; but when it is perfectly convenient you may repay me. Here is my card."

The boys thanked him as well as they could, — the tongue never can speak what the heart feels at such times, — and George said, —

"I wish you would go with us, sir, and tell that man that you lent us the money, for I don't want him to think we had it in our pockets all the time."

"That's natural," said the old gentleman; and, as they soon met the officer coming towards them again, he accosted him, and, standing by the boys, explained why they were then able to pay their fares, and bore his testimony to their honesty.

"I'm glad you are satisfied," replied the man, "and I hope you'll see your money again!"

"I'm sure I shall, if they are prospered," said the old gentleman, with a smile. "By the way, boys, I believe I neglected to take your names."

"Mine is *George Greenwood*."

"And mine," said the Other Boy, as the old gentleman began to write in his note-book, — "mine is *John H. Chatford*."

CHAPTER VII.

THE OTHER BOY'S STORY.

"You have n't told me yet," said George, as he walked back with his friend to their seat in the bow, "what you are going to New York for. You said it was a strange business."

"That 's the reason; it 's so very strange I 'm almost afraid to speak of it! But it 's about time for us to begin to be frank with each other, — don't you think so? — if we are to be fast friends."

"Certainly!" said George, who had not yet, however, said a word to his new acquaintance about the poems he had written, or his secret literary hopes. There are boys — and men too — who, in almost the first hour of their intercourse with you, will tell you of everything they have done, and of all they propose to do, with no more reserve than a cackling fowl. George, on the other hand, was quite too shy of making confidants, being genuinely modest and self-contained, and too little of an egotist to imagine everybody else interested in his schemes. But he was beginning to think he would tell his friend something, and he longed to hear his story.

"You noticed," said the Other Boy, "that I gave my name as *Chatford* to the old gentleman, but that

is not my real name. The *H.* stands for *Hazard*, — *Jack Hazard* is the name I generally go by, but Mr. Chatford is the man I live with, and he is just like a father to me, and as I never knew any own father, I 've lately taken his name."

"You said you were a driver on the canal once."

"Yes; the canal is almost the first thing I can remember. I 've some recollection of a woman who called herself my mother; her name was Hazard; she married old Captain Jack Berrick, who ran a scow, and who made a driver of me as soon as I was big enough to toddle on the tow-path and carry a whip. You can imagine what sort of a bringing-up I had! No schooling to speak of; the worst sort of companions, — dirt and rags and profanity!"

"You perfectly astonish me!" said George.

"Mother Hazard died in the mean while, and Captain Jack had taken another woman in her place. Molly Berrick was a good-hearted creature enough, and many a time she took my part against old Jack, who used to beat me when he was drunk. But she was a little too fond of the brown jug herself, — one of those low, ignorant women you scarcely meet with anywhere except on the canal."

"How did you ever get away from such people?"

"I ran away. Old Jack knocked me down and threw me overboard one evening, and I crept out on the shore into some bushes, and then cut for my life. After some curious adventures I found a home with the Chatfords, — just the best people that ever lived,

— at Peach Hill Farm. A niece of theirs, Miss Felton, now Mrs. Percy Lanman, kept the district school, and gave me private lessons, and corrected my bad language, and encouraged me in every way to improve my mind and my manners. I can never tell you how much I owe to her and my other good friends," added Jack, in a faltering voice. "Then I went to school the next winter to the man she afterwards married, — a fine teacher and a splendid fellow! Besides, I've been a good deal with her brother, Forrest Felton, who is a surveyor and a music teacher, and I've learned ever so many things of him, and from the books he has lent me. Then, again, last winter we had a good teacher, and I've read and studied at home at odd spells."

"How did you get your money?" George inquired.

"In various ways. In the first place I took a sugar-bush with Moses Chatford, and we made a little out of that. Then we took some land to work, and last year raised a crop of wheat. Then I had a horse. It's curious how I came by him. I'll tell you all about it some time, and any number of scrapes I've been in, and about my dog Lion, and the 'Lectrical 'Lixir man, and the Pipkins, — the funniest couple, — and Phin Chatford, and Byron Dinks and his school, and his old uncle Peternot, and the treasure the old man and I had a fight over, and Constable Sellick, and how I got away from him by swimming through a culvert under the canal,

and plenty of other things that would make a pretty thick book if they were all put into a story.* But I'm telling you now about this journey."

"And how you raised the money for it," said George, who, though a couple of years older, had yet been able to save less than Jack, and who wondered how any farm-boy could become possessed of so much.

"You see," replied Jack, "Deacon Chatford has been very liberal with us boys. He believes that is the right way to encourage us. He finds we do twice as much work, and like it ever so much better, and care less about spending our money foolishly, when we have an interest in what we're doing."

"And you like farming?" said George, wonderingly.

"Better than I like anything, except surveying."

"I hate farming!" exclaimed the young poet, with a look of intense disgust.

"May be that's partly owing to the way you've been put to it. Besides," said Jack, "I don't believe all boys have a natural liking for the same thing. I was made for a stirring out-door life; I like to see work going on, and to have something to say about it. I'd like well enough to be a farmer all my days; but I'd like better still to be a civil engineer, or something of that kind. You, I fancy

* For a full account of these adventures, see the preceding stories of this series: "Jack Hazard and his Fortunes," "A Chance for Himself," and "Doing His Best."

now, have a turn for something else. What do you take to?"

"I'll tell you some time, perhaps," said George, with a blush. "But let's have your story now."

"Well, when I saw that I was going to travel, — you see, I could n't very well help myself, such a strange thing had happened, — I just counted up my savings, and found that out of my sugar-money, and my wheat-money, and what Forrest Felton had paid me for helping him survey land, I had salted down, as they say, only about twenty-six dollars; for I buy my own books and clothes now, you know. That could n't be depended on, of course, for such a journey as I might have to make; it would n't much more than take me to New York and back. So I went to Mr. Chatford, and borrowed all the money he could spare, — twenty-five dollars, — on pretty good security. He keeps my horse. He's one of the kindest men to his dumb beasts, and I am sure Snowfoot will have good care. Then there is my winter wheat, — for Moses and I have a crop growing, did I tell you? And now," added Jack, "to think of all my own money, and what I had borrowed — " He clinched his hand and struck the pile of rope a sudden blow. "Hanging is too good for such pickpockets. Common thieving is bad enough, anyway; but to have a man take advantage of your good impulses, and steal your purse while you are doing an act of humanity, — or suppose you are — " Jack almost choked with a sense of the wrong,

then he went on, more calmly: "The purse was one Mrs. Lanman knit and gave me before she was married. I had it stolen from me once before, but got it again; I'll tell you about it some time. But there's no chance of my ever seeing it again, now!"

"You don't know about that; stranger things have happened," said George, who seemed to take this misfortune more calmly than Jack, now that the first excitement was over.

"Well," said Jack, "the money is gone, — yours as well as mine, — and we shall be in New York this evening, and to-morrow is Sunday! — have you thought of that? — and if we don't hit upon some way of raising the wind, we shall have to camp down at night in a coal-shed, or creep into an old hogshead or dry-goods box; — that won't be so hard for me as for you; I've done it before. But how about something to eat? Never mind," Jack added, seeing that he had brought a deeply anxious and gloomy look into his friend's face; "I've been in worse scrapes, and I bet we'll find some way out of this. We've all day to think of it. And — I started to tell you what I'm going to New York for. Somehow, I can't make up my mind to that."

"Here's Hudson, where we were going to be put off!" exclaimed George.

The boys watched the steamboat's approach to the landing, and wondered how it would really have seemed to be put ashore there, and what they would have done; then Jack continued his story.

"It was last Saturday, — only a week ago to-day, though it seems months, I've lived such a life since then! — I was coming home from the Basin, walking down the canal, on the *heel-path*, when I overtook an old scow, moving scarcely faster than the current. Now, I take a pretty lively interest in scows; and I'm always looking to see if my old square-toed friend is among them. You see, a fellow can't help a sort of curious feeling for what was once his home, even though it's nothing but an old floating hovel on the canal. 'Be it ever so humble,' as the song says, — and so forth. Well, this didn't happen to be Berrick's boat; but as I was watching it, I thought I saw, at the stern, a face I knew, — a haggard woman's face, without a bonnet. I wasn't quite certain; but I lifted my cap and bowed. At that she stared.

"'Jack Hazard,' says she, 'is that you?'

"'Yes, Molly!' I said, 'I'm Jack. How are you, and what's the news?'

"'No good news for me, since you left us, Jack!' says she.

"'You've swapped boats,' I said. 'Where's Captain Jack?'

"'Berrick has left the canal, and he's left me!' says she. 'Jack, come aboard here! I want to see ye, and tell ye something, — something I never could tell ye as long as I was with old Jack.'

"That excited me a little; for I felt something unusual was coming. I had always known that Berrick and Molly kept a secret from me, and had



MOLLY AND JACK.

thought a thousand times since I left them that I would give anything to know what it was.

"I was for getting aboard at once, but the scow was loaded, and could n't get over to the heel-path, and I had to run down a quarter of a mile to a bridge, and then, crossing over, go up and meet her on the other side. She laid up, and I jumped on, and shook hands with Molly, and asked what she had to tell me.

"'O Jack!' says she, 'I'm sick, and I sha'n't be able to make many trips more, unless I get better; and I'm so glad I've seen you; for it's troubled me that I've had a secret which you ought to know. Berrick kept it from you, for fear of losing his control of you; and after you got free of him, he said, "What's the use of telling the boy now? it'll do no good; and he may come back to us yet." But I knew you would n't come back.'

"Just then, she was taken with a fit of coughing, and had to go down to the cabin for some medicine. She beckoned to me to follow her. I went down, and — I never could begin to tell you how I felt, waiting for her to stop coughing and tell me the secret! You see, I knew it was something about myself. I told her so.

"'Yes, Jack,' says she, as soon as she could speak; 'that other woman, — Berrick's other wife, — the widder Hazard, that was, — she was n't your own mother, Jack!'

"That was just what I thought was coming; for, you know, I had more than half suspected as much for a long time, — I can hardly tell why. Things seem to be in the air sometimes, and you breathe them in. But to hear Molly speak out what I had only felt *might be* gave me an awful shock.

"'Then who *was* my mother?' I said.

"'That I don't know,' says she. 'Berrick don't know. The widder Hazard picked you up in the streets of New York. She did n't steal you, — she

was n't the sort of woman to do that,' says Molly; 'she was good-hearted, but without much prudence or conscience, I guess. You was crying in the streets, — a little fellow three or four years old, — a lost child. She took you, and was going to give you to a policeman, but she did n't meet one all the way down the street from Broadway to the North River. She was cook on board a lake boat that was going up the river that night. She was a motherly creature, and you cried yourself to sleep in her bosom, and as she had lately lost a little boy, she fell in love with you.'

"'But did n't she try to find my parents?' I said.

"'I 'm afraid she did n't do what she ought to have done,' says Molly. 'That night the boat was taken in tow by a steamer, and came up the river, and then made her trip on the canal and around the lakes, and it was weeks before she ever got back to New York again; and when she did, Ma'am Hazard was n't with her. She had fallen in with Berrick and married him. You kept her name of Hazard, but you was called Jack after the old man.'

"I asked how Molly knew all this, for if it was from Berrick I would n't believe a word of it, he 's such a liar. But she said she had the story from Mother Hazard herself.

"'I was with her the spring she died, when you was about seven,' says she, 'and she gave you into my charge, and told me to find your parents. But that Captain Jack never would let me do. He took

us both on the scow that summer, and the very next summer you began to drive the team.'

"She could n't tell where Berrick was; she only knew that he sold the scow last winter, and went down to New York. Mother Hazard told her I had yellow curls, and wore a pink frock, white stockings, and red morocco shoes, when she picked me up, and that was all I could learn. You can imagine how excited I was!

"And this," said Jack, "is what has sent me off to New York. Mr. Chatford said all he could to dissuade me, and finally lent me the money, for he saw I was bound to make the journey. I am going to hunt up my relations."

CHAPTER VIII.

GEORGE OPENS HIS HEART AND HIS TRUNK.

"How do you expect to find your relations? You have no clew," said George.

"No," replied Jack, "but I must have been advertised, and had a reward offered for me, when Mother Hazard was taking me up the river. I mean to hunt through the newspapers of a dozen or thirteen years ago, and if I find the advertisement of a lost child with yellow curls, pink frock, and so forth, I shall be pretty sure I am that child. That's my business. Nothing else could have sent me away from so good a home at such a time."

"You'll be better off than I, if you find your relations," said George, almost enviously; "they'll give you money if you need it."

"That's just what I meant to avoid," said Jack; "I'm not going on this expedition for any selfish purpose. I took all the money I could raise, so as to be independent of my relations, if I should find them. I felt that I ought to hunt them up. Think what grief and anxiety they must have suffered on my account, — lost in the streets of a great city and never heard from! Besides, I wish to satisfy myself and know who my relations are. Now think of my

landing in New York without a shilling in my pocket!"

Again Jack gave vent to his wrath against the thieves who had robbed them. Then, turning suddenly, he looked George full in the face.

"Come! now tell me *your* plans."

"Mine? Oh! — I — " George stammered and blushed again.

"Yes. You've something in view. It's one of those things that float in the air," said Jack; "I feel it. You needn't try to make me think you haven't some scheme you hope to put through."

"But it's so uncertain," hesitated George.

"No matter. So is my business. So is almost everything in this world. But don't tell me, if you don't want to. I thought perhaps you would like to have me know of it, since we've got to work together, — fast friends, you know."

George drummed on the deck with his foot, and cast down his eyes like a guilty wretch, as he said, still blushing, —

"I've — got — some — poems — in my trunk."

"Books?" queried Jack.

"N-o-o. Y-yes. I've got some books of poetry. You've seen some of them. But I don't mean those. I mean verses, — manuscripts."

"Copied?" said Jack.

"No." George gained courage and looked his companion in the face, with trustful, deep blue eyes, full of truth. "Some I composed myself."

"You! A poet?"

"I hope so; at any rate I make verses enough," replied George, with a smile of singular sweetness, and a certain inspired look, which gave Jack a new insight into his character.

Jack was hugely astonished. "There was something about you, — I wondered what it was. I see now! A poet! Why did n't I think of that?"

"Don't speak so loud," said George, in a low tone.

"You must show me your poetry," Jack continued.

"I will, some time."

"But what are you going to do with it in New York?"

"I will tell *you* what I have never breathed to a living soul! not even to Vinnie!" said George. "It 's only a vague idea in my mind, and I think, very likely, it will come to nothing; for I 'm not a very big fool! I shall try to have my poetry printed in a volume."

"And get some money for it?"

George was almost ashamed to own that his muse was so sordid; "But even a poet must have bread," he explained.

"But can you sell verses in that way?" said Jack. "Won't you be obliged to wait till the book sells before you get your money for it?"

"If I do," George answered, "I hope, in the mean while, to print in the newspapers something I may get pay for. I know some writers are paid."

"Have you ever printed anything?"

"O, yes; pieces in the Vanguard, — our county newspaper."

Jack looked with awe and admiration upon a young poet whose verses had actually seen the light of print.

"Show me some of those pieces!"

"I had them cut out; they were in my pocket-book. I wonder if the thieves will read them!" said George. "I 'll get some of the pieces out of my trunk, if you like," he proposed, encouraged by Jack's interest and sympathy.

Jack accompanied his friend, to help him get at his trunk. A mass of manuscript was soon unearthed from under a pile of books and shirts.

"You won't want to read many of these now," said George. "Here is 'Golboda: a Romance of the African Coast.' You might begin with that. It 's in the style of the 'Lady of the Lake.' Then, here is 'Mo-da-wee-kah: an Indian Tale,' in irregular metre, something like Byron's 'Siege of Corinth,' and 'Parisina.' I haven't decided which I shall make the leading poem of my volume; I should like your opinion. Then, here are 'Fugitive Leaves,' — songs and ballads and fragments."

"And did you write all these?" said Jack, wonderingly, as he turned the pages. "How could you ever do it?"

"O, it 's the easiest thing in the world! I composed the whole of 'Mo-da-wee-kah' while ploughing our summer fallow, and wrote down, each night, be-

fore going to bed, the lines I had made during the day. I can't read a poem that I like, but a burning desire seizes me to go and write something in the same style. For that reason, I 'm afraid some of these pieces will sound like imitations. For instance, here 's a fragment, — 'Isabel,' — which reads so much like Coleridge's 'Christabel,' that I shall be afraid to include it in the volume."

Jack read a little of "Golboda," and was surprised to find the lines so smooth, and the rhymes so musical. But he could n't keep his mind on it very long; and, without suspecting that the fault might be in the poem, he accused himself of being over-anxious about their situation. Besides, a thought had suddenly struck him.

"It 's good!" he said. "George, you are a poet! It does sound like the 'Lady of the Lake,' — and I don't see but it 's almost as good."

George, who had been watching him with keen anxiety, and had felt his heart sink at the reader's first symptoms of weariness and inattention, smiled at this doubtful compliment.

"But, George, I 've an idea!"

"What?" said George, with a nervous tremor.

"You 've got some things in your trunk, here, which you can shove up."

"Shove up?" George stared.

"Yes," said Jack, confidently; "up the spout."

"The spout? What 's that?"

"Don't you know? There are pawnbrokers' shops

in all large cities, where you can borrow money on anything, — from a key-bugle to a jack-knife; from a pocket Bible to a suit of clothes."

"I had n't thought of that! And can you always get your things again?"

"Yes; by paying back the money, within a certain time, with interest. What else have you? What can you spare the best?"

"I shall hate to part with my books!" said George, "or my clothes, or — I don't know; perhaps I can *shove up*, as you call it, this flute, as well as anything."

"A flute! Do you play the flute?" said Jack, with joyful surprise.

"Yes, a little."

"Oh! Forrest Felton plays the flute, and I have begun to learn. I wish you could keep that. There 's nothing like a little music to comfort a fellow, when he gets lonesome. Can you play dancing tunes?"

George modestly confessed to some slight skill of touch. Then, suddenly, Jack exclaimed, "By gracious!"

"What now?" George inquired.

"Another idea! Shut your trunk, and bring along your flute, and I 'll tell you!"

CHAPTER IX.

HEAD AND HEELS.

GEORGE followed with some curiosity, while Jack led the way back to their favorite nook at the bow.

"Now let me hear you play a few tunes."

George, after some hesitation, blushingly put the flute to his lips, and played "Mrs. Macdonald" with much grace and sweetness. Encouraged by Jack's applause, he then played the "Copenhagen Waltz" and "Fisher's Hornpipe." Jack was delighted; and, during the performance of the last piece, sprang to his feet, in a little open space of the deck, before the capstan, threw himself into a jaunty attitude, and began to dance, keeping perfect time to the music, with his shoes, upon the smooth floor. A crowd was beginning to gather about them, when Jack finished with a surprising flourish and shuffle and whirl, and tumbled himself down on the ropes by his friend's side.

"That's complete!" exclaimed George, whose eye and ear had been charmed by the rhythmical sound and movement of the dance. "Where did you learn so much?"

"On the canal, when I was a little shaver. I used to amuse the boatmen and stable-keepers with my

dancing tricks. I learned them of the drivers," said Jack, a little out of breath.

"I've seen drivers dance; but I never saw anything quite so neat!" his friend declared.

"I could do such things *once*, very well," said Jack, wiping his forehead. "But I've been mostly out of practice since I left the canal. Last fall, I danced a little to Forrest Felton's playing. Moses Chatford found it out, and, at noontimes, last winter, I did a double-shuffle, once in a while, in the school-house entry. Lucky for us!"

George did not quite comprehend the force of the remark.

"Don't you see? There's money in it!" And, to his friend's astonishment, Jack proceeded to unfold his idea. "We can draw a crowd, easy enough! We'll go up on the passenger-deck, and I'll dance to your playing, and then pass round the hat for pennies."

"I never could do it in the world!" said George, abashed at the bare suggestion.

"But you must!" urged Jack. "It's our only chance. I don't fancy it any more than you do; but it will be evening by the time we reach New York, and we may be too late for the pawnbrokers' shops, and to-morrow is Sunday, and any honest business is better than starvation or beggary."

"But this is only a kind of beggary," George objected, while the sweat started out on his face at the thought of making a public spectacle of himself.

"We have a good excuse for doing it," Jack argued. "I shall have the hardest part. And I'll pass round the hat. Playing the flute won't be bad."

George remembered that the poet Goldsmith once gained the means of subsistence, on a foot journey through Germany and Switzerland, by playing the flute at the doors of peasants, who lodged and fed him for his music; and after much bashful hesitation, he consented to Jack's plan.

"We'll wait till after dinner," said Jack. "Passengers will be better-natured when they have been fed, and more inclined to give their pennies. Besides, they will begin to be tired of the boat later in the day, and want some amusement."

George, who would not have thought so far as that, gave his companion credit for wonderful sagacity.

They had a few crackers in their coat-pockets, and of these they made a frugal repast, while their fellow-passengers (except those who had likewise brought provisions aboard), in answer to the steward's bell, thronged to the steamboat table. As the two friends ate, they discussed the probable success of their scheme, and arranged their programme.

The day was fine and not too cool, though so early in the season. The Catskill Mountains were long since passed, and the celebrated scenery of the Hudson was growing a little monotonous, when our two youthful adventurers, at just the right moment, made their appearance on the upper deck. It was



HEAD AND HEELS.

thronged with passengers, occupying stools and benches, or walking up and down.

Jack found a clear space on one side, and said to his friend, "This will do. Put your back against that pillar. Now, don't think of anything but me and the music."

George's cheeks were afire with blushes, and his heart was beating violently. It took him some time to gain confidence and breath to begin. He was also greatly embarrassed by the conspicuous shortness of his sleeves, as he put up his arms, holding the flute to his lips. He had never felt so awkward in his life. But resolution, which he did not lack, overcame self-distrust and bashfulness, and he blew a few wildly sweet premonitory notes. Then he struck into the *Fisher's Hornpipe*, while Jack, standing near, nodded approvingly, and beat time with his finger. Then Jack began his part.

In a minute there was a ring of spectators around the two performers, and a crowd pressing up from behind. On one side stood George, flute to lips, his back against the pillar; and in the midst was Jack, his head thrown back, now a little on one side and now on the other, his face animated, his hands on his hips, one of them holding his hat, his whole body lithe and agile, feet flying, and heels and toes striking the floor with surprising rapidity and precision. The old spirit of the canal-driver seemed to have come back upon him, and there was something almost saucy in his appearance.

The end of the dance was greeted with a murmur of satisfaction, and Jack immediately passed around his hat.

"Gentlemen," said he, "this is n't exactly our trade, but we 're driven to it by necessity. We had our pockets picked when we came aboard at Albany, as some of you noticed; and we 're trying to raise a little money to pay for our supper and lodging."

The gentlemen, pretty generally, put their hands into their pockets, and a good many pennies, together with a few small silver pieces, fell into Jack's hat. He did not confine himself to the ring, but, breaking through it, gave everybody within sound of the flute a chance to contribute.

In the mean while George, finding the public attention directed from him, gained confidence, and played *Sweet Home*, and one or two tender Scotch airs, with much beauty and feeling. What he lacked in brilliancy of execution, — and he was by no means a brilliant player, — he more than made up in expression. He was surprised to find himself playing so well; his audience inspired him; a feeling of triumph filled his heart.

In a little while, Jack returned, with a joyful countenance, and dropped at his friend's feet a hat well ballasted with clinking coin.

"Now, my friends," said he, gayly, "if you will be so obliging as to stand back a little, and make a larger ring, you can all see and hear just as well, and others will be accommodated. Besides, some of

you are standing before the ladies, on those benches; and I am sure you are too polite to wish to do that."

George struck up a lively air, to which Jack danced a "double-shuffle," putting in his most difficult and astonishing touches. By this time it had become noised around that these were the lads who had had their pockets picked, and the curiosity excited by their novel situation drew, perhaps, quite as many spectators as the skill of the performance. The next time Jack, with glowing face and sparkling eyes, passed round the hat, he was greeted with many a kind question and pleasant joke, and, what was more to his purpose, a generous contribution of small coins. At the same time, the remarks he heard about himself amused him.

"That boy will make his way in the world!"

"Smart as lightning!"

"If his head 's as good as his heels, he 'll do!"

A lady, dressed in black, seated on one of the benches, dropped a York shilling into his hat, and questioned him, with motherly eyes full of affectionate interest.

"Did you never dance for money before?"

Jack felt that he could honestly say no, though he remembered that when he was a canal-driver and danced for the boatmen, they sometimes tossed him a penny.

"How much money did you lose by the pickpockets?"

"I lost forty dollars, and my friend lost almost as much."

"And you are poor boys?"

"That was all the money we had in the world."

The lady felt in her pocket, and dropped another shilling into his hat. As she was plainly clad, and had not at all the air of a rich person, Jack remonstrated.

"Don't give us anything because we are poor boys," he said, blushingly. "Though that is true enough, we are not beggars. We only ask pay for our entertainment, if anybody has been entertained."

"I have n't half paid you for my entertainment," the lady replied, with a tender smile. "You interest me. How long have you two been travelling together?"

"Only two or three days. I fell in with him by the way."

"Have you parents? Is your mother living?"

"I 'm alone in the world," was Jack's reply, as he passed on.

Near by stood the old gentleman who had befriended the two boys; and he now shook Jack cordially by the hand.

"I want to pay you back the money you lent us, and thank you again for your kindness," said Jack, with grateful emotion. "We 're in luck, you see."

"I see, — and glad I am!" said the old gentleman. "But never mind about the money just now. You

may need it, after all. You have n't got through your troubles yet."

And he firmly refused to receive back the loan.

"I knew they were honest boys!" Jack heard him say, as again he passed on.

CHAPTER X.

MR. FITZ DINGLE'S GENEROUS OFFER.

"THIS will do for the present," Jack said, returning to his friend. "We don't want to make nuisances of ourselves."

They withdrew from the crowd, and, returning to the nook in the bow, sat down to count their money. It was all in copper cents, York sixpences and shillings (old-fashioned six and a quarter and twelve and a half cent silver pieces, called fourpences and ninepences in New England), dimes and half-dimes, which, carefully counted, and placed in separate piles, were found to amount to the snug little sum of four dollars and eighty cents.

"Now, what do you say?" said the exultant Jack. "Two dollars and forty cents apiece! Not a bad job, hey?"

"I never would have believed it!" exclaimed George, gleefully. "It seems too good a joke! I thought I should burst with laughter once, when I thought of it, in the middle of a tune! Did n't you notice I almost broke down? What would Vinnie say?"

And he shook with merriment, while he tried to keep a sober face, and pulled down his coat-sleeves.

The boys were observed by two or three passengers and boat-hands; and presently they saw a portly gentleman, in light kid gloves and a white waistcoat, with a hooked nose, a florid face, and a defect in his left eye, moving somewhat pompously toward them.

"Good pile, eh?" he said in a hoarse bass voice, with a leer of pleasantry. "Ha! ha! pretty well!"

He winked knowingly at them; and the boys noticed that the lids of the defective eye stuck together after the operation, remained so for a second or two, then peeled slowly apart, and came open in a most comical fashion. Indeed, the man's whole appearance, with his red face, his leer, his light kids, and his white waistcoat, — out of season, and giving him an air of coarse gentility, — struck the boys as grotesque and absurd.

"We have several piles," replied Jack, coldly, — for he did not greatly fancy the man's acquaintance.

"I see! And you've got something better; did ye know it?" He winked again shrewdly, and added, while the comical eye was slowly coming open as before, "You've got a fortune in your heels!"

"Have I?" said Jack, interested. "I didn't know it."

"I know it," replied the man. "And shall I tell you how I know it?"

"If you please," said Jack, puzzled and curious.

"Because I've a professional eye!" the man answered, with another extraordinary leer and wink.

Jack had a mind to ask, "Which eye?" as if uncertain whether it was the twinkler, or the one which happened just then to be glued up again; but he thought he would not be saucy; so he simply asked, "What's that?"

"I'm professional," said the man. "You understand!"

"Indeed!" said Jack, though he did n't understand in the least.

"Certainly," with a flourish of the gloved hands, while the white waistcoat swelled prodigiously. "In the artistic line. I could give you an opening. I am proprietor of a troupe."

"A troop of what?" asked Jack, watching with a sort of fascination the peeling open of the comical eye. "Horses?"

"Artists!" said the man, impressively.

"Oh! Painters?" said Jack, whose idea of an artist was somewhat old-fashioned. As this suggestion was met by a violent leer and puffing of the waistcoat, he added, "What sort of artists?"

"Well," said the man, strutting to and fro before the boys, with his gloved thumbs hooked into the armholes of his waistcoat, — "'hem! — at the present time," — he paused, and turned his good eye on Jack again, — "to be plain, — nigger minstrels."

"Negroes?" said Jack; for the colored-minstrel business was rather a new thing in those days.

"Not the genuine article, — ha, ha!" said the man, resuming his walk. "No! Imitations. Genuine art, if not the genuine article!" and he laughed at his own joke. "One of the most elegant places of amusement in the metropolis. I've the best bones in the country, — I don't hesitate to say in the whole world."

"The best bones?" queried Jack, who could n't



"IT 'S JUST THE PLACE FOR YOU, YOUNG MAN."

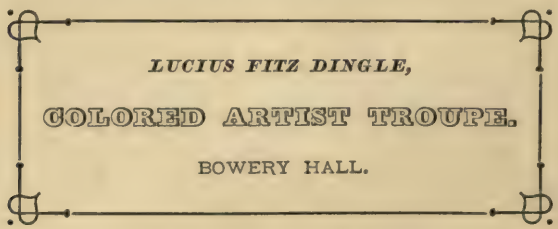
see how this man's bones differed from those of any other person possessing a sound constitution.

"The best bones; the man who plays the bones,— you understand; and certainly the best low-comedy tenor in New York; and now I want a person for the clog dance. It's just the place for you, young man. Good pay to begin with, and a fortune in your heels, — as I said before, — after I have developed you into a great artist."

"What do you call good pay?" asked Jack.

"Two dollars a week is good pay at first. Here is my card."

It was a bit of enamelled pasteboard, on which Jack read, in fancy letters, which seemed affectedly fine, for the name of so coarse a man: —



"What should I have to do?" inquired Jack.

"Black your face and hands, dress in character, — plantation darky, — dandified colored gemman, — and dance three or four dances in the course of the evening. I warrant you a big success!" And the good eye twinkled with professional delight at anticipated audiences, while the other struggled vainly to get open.

Jack exchanged glances with George, who looked dismayed at the thought of parting with his friend; then answered quietly and firmly, "Thank you, sir; I don't think I'll black my face and sell my heels for two dollars a week, just now."

"I'll say three dollars, if you'll engage for the season," added Fitz Dingle. "You're a mere boy, you know."

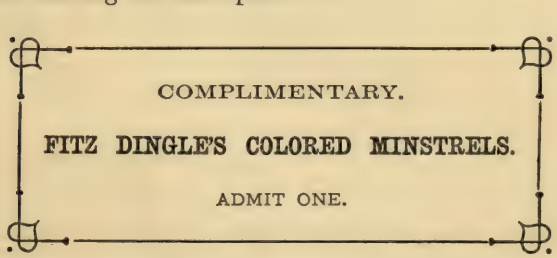
Jack still shook his head.

"Very well; three dollars for the first week; then, if you like to stay, an increase of a quarter a week."

But Jack had made up his mind.

"Well, come and see my show, anyway. You'll find it extremely popular and attractive. And bring your friend."

So saying, he handed Jack a couple of red tickets, each bearing the inscription: —



And, urging his "young friend" to think of it, with a flourish of the kids, and a persuasive leer and wink, the professional gentleman stepped gracefully from the stage, — his bad eye having already retired behind the curtain.

The boys laughed; and Jack, who had, during the scene, mechanically divided the little piles of coin into two equal portions, now pushed one of them towards George, with one of Fitz Dingle's red tickets.

"There 's your share," said he.

"It 's more than my share," George declared. "We should n't have a penny, if it had n't been for you."

"But half is yours; you remember our agreement," Jack insisted.

"Well, keep it all for the present, and pay expenses," said George, who hated to have anything to do with matters of money.

"Carry all these coppers? They would tear my pockets out!" said Jack.

"Well, I 'll help you bear the load."

George took up the ticket and looked at it.

"Shall we go and see Fitz Dingle's elegant entertainment?"

"Some time, — maybe. And who knows," added Jack, "but I shall be glad to take up with his offer? We 've already seen that when a fellow breaks down, a pair of heels ain't bad to fall back on!"

CHAPTER XI.

ARRIVAL IN NEW YORK.

THE boys were now in gay spirits, and the last part of their voyage down the river was as delightful as the outset had been gloomy.

"I wish this was to last a week!" exclaimed George, who had a poet's passion for the water, and whose eye could not gaze enough on the brown cliffs of the Palisades, rising precipitately four or five hundred feet above the western shore. Besides, his was a dreamy, rather inert nature; he loved repose, and dreaded responsibility and the uncertainty of change.

But swiftly the steamer ploughed her silver furrow; and the lofty, columnar fronts of the Palisades cast broader and deeper shadows across the great river. Then the river, widening fast, left them behind, and spires and shipping, city roofs and wharves, began to appear. On the left was New York, with Jersey City opposite, on the right; and the mighty flood of the Hudson — here an arm of the bay — flowing between, alive with passing and repassing sails and ferry-boats, and sparkling in the last beams of the setting sun.

"See that!" murmured Jack, pointing to a steamer having a dozen lake and canal boats in

tow. No more was said, but George knew his friend was thinking of the way he made his first voyage up the river.

A little after six o'clock the boat reached her pier. Then came the excitement and bustle of landing. Jack took his light valise in one hand, and with the other helped George carry his trunk ashore. On the wharf they were beset by porters and hackmen clamoring for patronage. George was quite distracted by their vociferous appeals, which he thought himself obliged politely to decline; and he was soon glad to take Jack's advice.

"Don't pay any attention to 'em! Look straight at your nose, and come ahead!"

In fact, as soon as it was seen that here were two young fellows who knew their own business, and could take care of themselves and their baggage, they were allowed to pass unmolested.

They crossed the street, dodging between thundering carts and coaches, and carried their baggage down the basement stairs of a low, dark eating-house on a corner opposite. There they made a pretty good supper for thirty cents, and had four dollars and fifty cents left of their late earnings. Getting permission to leave the trunk and valise there for an hour or two, they then sallied forth in search of a boarding-house.

"How to find one is the question," said George, quite bewildered by the turmoil and hubbub of the vast city, upon which the night was shutting down.

But Jack had an idea.

"The grocery stores will know where the boarding-houses are." And with this clew they began their search.

Boarding-houses proved plentiful enough, but the trouble was to find them amid so many distracting streets, the very names of which they had never heard before. In some places it was so dark that they could not see the numbers, and had to inquire at several doors before the right one was found. At these George, if he happened to go first, knocked in good country fashion.

"Why don't you ring?" asked Jack, who found him at one, vainly pounding and bruising his knuckles, until he quite despaired of getting a response.

"Ring — how?" cried George.

Jack showed him; and then and there, for the first time in his life, our young poet from the rural districts had experience of a door-bell.

"Never tell anybody I was so green!" he said, as they walked on, blushing very red in the gleam of the gaslight.

One boarding-house was too ill-kept and musty for their taste; another, too elegant for their means; and a third, too full even to make room for a couple of boys. At a fourth, they were somewhat abashed by the demand, from a staring and uncombed young woman, who answered their ring: —

"Be's ye married gintlemen, wantin' board for yerselves an' wives?"

"I — rather — think not!" replied Jack. Then, recovering his wits a little, he gave George a sly punch, with, "I haven't any wife, — have you?"

"Not that I know of!" said George, in an unsteady voice.

They were then explicitly informed by the uncombed young woman that the said boarding-house took only "married gintlemen an' their wives," and that it was a "pair of ill-mannered monkeys that would stand laughin' in a dacent body's face." George would have explained that they were not smiling at her; but the door was already slammed.

At length they found in Duane Street a house that suited them quite well, both as to style and price of board, though George thought two dollars a week high; and the little room they were shown was far up in the house. The landlady assured them, on the contrary, that the room was "very low indeed," all her boarders being first-class, and her house quite genteel.

She was a much-wrinkled, sallow, care-worn woman, and she looked so weary as she stood holding the lamp for them, that they made haste to close the bargain, and let her go.

They then returned for the trunk and valise, which they carried along the ill-lighted sidewalks, often changing hands or stopping and sitting down on the baggage to rest. The distance seemed immense, and their arms and shoulders ached well before they got back to their lodging.

Again the sallow landlady held the lamp for them, while, with prodigious sweating and panting, they lugged their awkward load up several flights of stairs to their little attic. Then they set down the trunk on one side and the valise in a corner, and thanked her, and wiped their foreheads.

Such was the arrival of our young heroes in the great metropolis.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BOARDING-HOUSE. — LOCKED OUT.

THE landlady placed the lamp (which smoked badly, and gave but a dim light) on a small pine table by the head of the bed, but did not immediately withdraw.

"I am obliged to ask you for a week's board in advance," she said in a feeble but quite business-like tone of voice. "That's my rule," she added, as the boys hesitated and looked at each other.

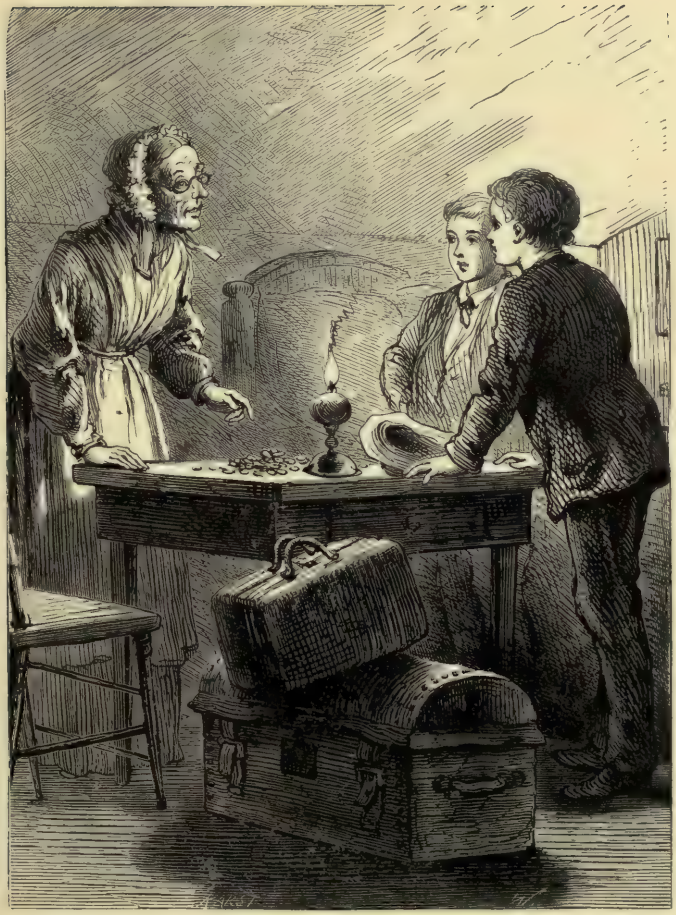
"Certainly," said George, with his hand in his pocket. "Can you use — "

"Small change?" continued Jack, also with his hand in his pocket.

"Anything that's money," replied the landlady, with a faint smile, which changed, however, to a look of surprise and dismay, as she saw a pile of great copper cents tumbled out on the table, together with smaller piles of silver coins. "Mercy on me! have n't you got nothin' else?" she inquired.

The boys were sorry to own that their means were thus limited.

"Well, I 'll send Bridget with a basket. Or — no — I 'll take it!" She made a bag of her apron, and went out heavily freighted with the said "small change."



An Astonished Landlady.

George sat down on his trunk; Jack took the chair (there was but one); then they looked at each other, and grinned.

"Does it seem to you as if we were really in New York?" said George, who had anticipated something so very different. "Think of us lugging our trunks through the streets and up these stairs, and then paying off the old lady in coppers and sixpences! Is n't it ridiculous?"

"I don't mind that," said Jack. "But how are we going to pay our next week's board in advance? Lucky if we have even the coppers and sixpences to do it with!"

"She won't trust us a day, now she has seen the bottom of our pockets," replied George.

"We have just half a dollar left," remarked Jack. "And we should n't have that, if our debts were paid."

"How glad I am I did n't take Vinnie's money!" cried George. "She has a few dollars, which she has earned by helping the neighbors in times of sickness. If I had done as she wished, the pick-pockets would have that too. But she made me promise to write to her for it; I shall hate to, though!"

"Let 's hope you won't have to!" exclaimed Jack, springing up. "Come, I 'm rested. What do you say to a look at the city before going to bed?"

"I 'd like to see some part of it besides the back streets we lugged our trunks through!" exclaimed

George. "Broadway is close by, — just at the upper end of this street."

They went out, and were soon walking up and down the great thoroughfare, dazzled and charmed by the life and brilliancy, the throng of people, the endless vistas of street lights, and the glittering magnificence of the shops. In the present enjoyment they forgot the dubious future; they rambled on and on, until the crowd slowly melted away, and the shops began to close; then they had a mile or more to walk home.

When at length they turned into Duane Street, they found it silent and deserted, their boarding-house dark, and the door locked.

Jack rang the bell gently, at first, then with more and more vigorous pulls; and George even returned to his primitive style of knocking with his knuckles, and (when they were sore) of pounding with his fist. All in vain; the house remained as dark and still as before.

Thus several anxious minutes elapsed, and the boys grew alarmed.

"You don't think it possible that we are thundering at the wrong house, do you?" said George, stepping backwards, and looking up at the windows.

They could not see the number on the door; but Jack said he was sure of the house, because it was just opposite the end of a narrow little park, which adorned (and, I believe, still adorns) that part of the

street. It was certainly their boarding-house; and another thing was no less certain, — they were locked out.

"Ring again!" cried George, with an energy that surprised his friend. "There's a light up there, in the top story. We'll bring somebody, or pull the house down!"

They could hear the bell tinkling faintly; but still there was no response.

"This is beautiful!" said Jack. "We may have to crawl into a coal-shed, or an empty hogshead on some wharf, after all; or else spend the last of our money for cheap lodgings."

"After we've paid her in advance!" cried George. "I'd climb up and break into that parlor window for three cents!"

"I would n't!" replied Jack. "I got into a scrape by breaking into a house once, and I made up my mind I never would break into another, even if it was the White House at Washington, and I was President of the United States."

"Look here!" said George, "I believe that's the light in our own room; we left the lamp burning, you know!"

"We are supposed to be in there, — abed and asleep, as everybody else in the house is," said Jack.

Just then a solitary pedestrian came sauntering down the silent street, on the same side where the boys were. Seeing their predicament, he stopped

and regarded them with an air of amused curiosity.

"What's the matter with the door?" he said to Jack.

"There's nothing the matter with the door," Jack replied; "it seems to be a pretty good door; but it's locked, and we want to get in."

"Why don't you ring?"

"We have been ringing — rather!" said George; "but everybody seems to be deaf or dead."

"Perhaps you don't understand it," said the man, with an air of slyly enjoying the situation.

He stepped up to the door, fumbled with the handle a moment, and then exclaimed: "Why, your door is open!" And, indeed, so it was.

"I don't see through that!" cried Jack. "There must be some trick about these city doors I'm not up to."

George thought it must have been opened from the inside by some person who had glided away. The stranger offered no opinion, but continued to smile with much amusement as he stepped back to let the boys in.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MYSTERIOUS GENTLEMAN.

THE entry being quite dark, he kindly inquired if they knew the way to their room.

"Not so well as we should, to find it without a light," replied George.

"Perhaps we can make a light." The stranger stepped into the entry, struck a match on the sole of his boot, and held it to light them up the first flight of stairs. They were then bidding him good night, with many thanks, when he said, "You have n't got to your own room yet, have you?"

"No, it 's away up in the attic."

"Who keeps this house?" he inquired, as he followed them up. They told him it was Mrs. Libby. He struck another match on his boot-sole, and as it was lighting, observed, "Mrs. Libby may be a very worthy woman, and she may keep an excellent house, but I shall tell her she ought not to lock her lodgers out, or have such dark entries."

As he insisted on showing them in the same way up the third flight, they hastened on to their room in order to get the lamp and, in return for his kindness, light him down again. But he quietly entered with them, smiling, and looking about him in a very leisurely manner.

"I 'll light you down to the door, when you are ready," said George, who stood holding the lamp.

"I 'm in no hurry," he replied. "I want to breathe a spell, after coming up so many flights."

"Sit down," said Jack, offering the chair.

"Thank you. But where will you sit? Mrs. Libby ought to furnish two lodgers with more than one chair!"

Jack seated himself on the trunk. George, after some hesitation, replaced the lamp on the table, and sat down on the bed. Their visitor also seated himself, placed his hat on the floor, crossed his legs in a very comfortable manner, looking so much as if he had come to stay that the boys regarded him with growing surprise and uneasiness. They could now see that he was a man about forty-five years old, well dressed, somewhat round-shouldered, with neatly combed hair and whiskers and a marvellously pleasant countenance.

He sat and talked for a few minutes about the discomforts of city boarding-houses, and then astonished the boys by coolly pulling off one of his boots. He then asked them some friendly questions about themselves, — how long they had been in the city, what they thought of it, and the like, — and then quite filled them with consternation by kicking off his other boot.

George thought he would give him a polite hint by asking the time of night.

"It 's early yet," said the cool gentleman, pulling out his watch. "Not quite twelve o'clock."

"If you are not going soon," said Jack, "perhaps I had better step down and see that the door is fast." He certainly thought that would start him.

"I looked out for that," said he, smiling blandly. "The door is all right."

The boys were now more than ever puzzled and disturbed.

"Do you live on this street?" Jack inquired.

"Certainly," he replied, appearing as if he understood perfectly well their perplexity, and rather enjoyed it.

"Near here?"

"Rather near."

"Sha' n't we — see you home?" faltered George.

"You are very kind. But I know the way." And the cool gentleman began — very coolly — to loosen his cravat.

Jack, unable to keep his seat on the trunk, now came and stood by the bed near George.

"We don't want to turn you out," he said, as civilly as he could; "and we 're certainly very much obliged to you; but it is getting late for country boys like us, and if you have no objections — "

"O, not the slightest in the world! I think I 'll go to bed too." And the gentleman proceeded to wind his watch.

"How shall we get rid of him?" whispered Jack.

"I don't know! He's a regular Old Man of the Sea!" muttered George.

"*I* leave *my* boots outside the door to be blacked," observed the visitor, as he gathered up the articles he had kicked off, and set them out in the entry.

"I don't just see where you are going to sleep," said George, thinking it time that question was settled. "Our bed won't very well hold more than two."

"I should n't think it would. And you did n't for a moment imagine I was going to sleep with you; did you? I am going to sleep alone!"

"For my part, I should like to know where!" cried Jack.

"I think I can find a place. Let me take the lamp just one moment! Mrs. Libby must have plenty of rooms."

As the cool gentleman had already taken the lamp, and seemed about setting off in search of apartments, the boys started after him in no little alarm.

"She told us this was the only vacant room!" cried George.

"Did she?" The man smiled with the same curious, amused expression, which had puzzled the boys from the first, and, taking up his hat with one hand, while he carried the lamp in the other, still moved towards the door. "Mrs. Libby may be a very truthful woman," he said; "but I think I can find a place to sleep."

"What shall we do?" whispered George. "Why did we ever let him into the house?"

"It 's too late to ask that; he 's in!" replied Jack.

"He must be insane!" said George.

"More likely drunk!" muttered Jack. "We must watch him."

The stranger marched deliberately into an adjoining room; the boys followed him, and hardly knew whether they were glad or sorry to find it unoccupied. There he hung up his hat, slipped his feet into a pair of pumps, and then lighted a lamp which he found on the table.

"This is some lodger's room!" exclaimed George.

"It certainly looks like it; and a very good room it is. I think it will suit me very well. Now I 'll return your lamp, with many thanks."

"Do you know Mrs. Libby?" demanded Jack.

"I think I ought to. I board with her."

"And you — the front door — this room —" stammered George, just beginning to see through the joke.

The lodger smilingly pulled off his coat. "My name is Manton; and this is my room. I was in it when you brought your baggage. I knew you at the door, and let you in with my latch-key. Good night, young gentlemen! Don't stumble over my boots!"

The boys rushed back to their room, strangling with mingled mirth and chagrin, shut the door, put down the lamp, and held their sides.

"I rather think," said George, "we have been badly sold! What do you think?"

"I think —"

But Jack's voice grew inarticulate, and he tumbled on the bed in a spasm of laughter.

CHAPTER XIV.

MORNING IN THE CITY.

Both boys, accustomed to early rising, were up and dressed betimes the next morning, refreshed by their brief but sound sleep, and eager for new experiences.

They looked down from their lofty window upon the quiet street, and remembered that it was Sunday. The sunshine was stealing over the city roofs, slanting softly down across the fronts of dingy brick, and even gilding the gutters with beams as pure and fresh as were then falling upon their far-off country homes. The air was deliciously cool and enticing. A few doves flapped past, quite near the open window. Robins and sparrows were singing in the trees of the little park below. The vast Babel was strangely silent and at rest; only the noisy cart and rattling bell of a stout milkman, driving from door to door, and a newsboy crying the Sunday papers, broke the stillness of the solitary street.

Scarce another lodger was astir when George and Jack passed once more down the stairs up which they had lugged their baggage, and afterwards been lighted by Mr. Manton's matches, the night before. As there were as yet no signs of breakfast, they

went on to the street door, fastened back the night-latch so that they could get in again, and went out.

I am sure that neither of them ever forgot that first Sunday morning's walk in the city. George afterwards celebrated it in verse, contrasting the early Sabbath coolness and quiet with the fashionable throngs of church-goers filling the spacious sidewalks of Broadway some hours later, and the roar and rush and heat when, on week-days, the tide of life and traffic was at its height.

They went as far as the Battery, and were enchanted with their stroll about the grounds, beautiful in the first bright green of spring, and above all with the view of the water. A gentle south-wind was blowing, and the harbor seemed alive with light waves, frolicking in the sun and dashing against the Battery wall. There were ships riding at anchor, steam ferry-boats plying across the East River to Brooklyn, and across the North River to Jersey City, a brig under full sail coming up the bay, and tugs and sail-boats ploughing and tacking to and fro. A shipload of Dutch emigrants, mostly in wooden shoes, — the women in petticoats and the men in short trousers, but large enough for meal-bags, — were landing at a wharf near by; not the least novel and interesting sight, especially to George, who had seen far less of the world than Jack.

Fascinated by the scene, the boys would hardly have known how to leave it, had not a keen sense of hunger reminded them of breakfast. Then they had

a walk of over a mile back to their lodgings in Duane Street. They were glad enough to hear a loud hand-bell ringing vigorously in the lower entry as they opened the door; and were disappointed, afterwards, to learn that it was only the "first bell." Breakfast was half an hour later.

"My boarders ain't gener'ly in no hurry for their breakfas'es, Sunday mornings," remarked Mrs. Libby, to whom they applied for reliable information on that important subject.

Her rooms were well filled with "gentleman boarders," as they were politely called; there being not a "lady boarder" in the house. Several had already assembled in the parlor, — where the boys went, to wait for the second bell, — and were eagerly looking over the columns of "wants" in the Sunday papers. They had generally a clean-shaved, clean-starched, Sunday-morning appearance; and Jack — judging from their bleached faces and style of dress — declared they were all "citified."

"By Cæsar!" suddenly broke forth one, — a pale young man in very tight pants, —spitefully hitting his newspaper with the tips of his fingers.

"What is it, Simpson?" asked a seedy but carefully brushed old gentleman who had no newspaper, and seemed to be waiting for a chance at somebody else's.

"Here 's that humbug advertisement again, — you know, — confidential clerk on Chatham Street, — up two flights."

"I went for that situation," remarked the old gentleman.

"So did I!" "So did I!" cried two or three others.

"I thought *I'd* like to be a confidential clerk," said Simpson; — "saw the advertisement the first thing Tuesday morning, made a rush for Chatham Street, found the place, and a crowd of about a hundred there before me, all wanting to be confidential clerks! They blocked both flights of stairs and extended out into the street. I waited two hours — concluded 't was no use — and came away."

"I waited at least three hours," said the old gentleman. "I finally got to the office, and gave in my application and address to a man at the desk. Thought, of course, I was too late. Now, you don't say the advertisement is in again!"

From this talk, and much that followed, the boys were appalled to learn that nearly all Mrs. Libby's "gentleman boarders" were out of employment, seeking situations in the city.

"There 's hundreds of places advertised, but I don't see as anybody ever gets 'em," said a bilious young man, whom the others called Tarball. "If I don't hear of something this week, hanged if I won't enlist in the navy!"

"What 's become of that young fellow — Parsons, I believe, was his name?" asked a tall young man who sat facing one of the windows. He wore a stiff standing collar, which compelled him, when he wished

to turn his head and address the company, partly to turn his whole body, and partly to give his chin a cant, lifting the edge of it over the fence of starched linen. "I have n't seen him for a week."

"O, Parsons got to the bottom of his purse ten days ago," replied Tarball. "It 's the third time he has come down from the country to find business in town, spent all his money, and had to go back again. I tell you, there 's no chance. You are one of the lucky ones, Timkins!"

Timkins was the tall one in the stiff dicky; and his luck (as the boys learned afterwards) consisted in his having secured a clerkship, much to the wonder and envy of his fellow-boarders. This may account for the fact that he was the only person in the room who had a newspaper and was not diligently reading the "wants."

"Have *you* come to town to get business?" he suddenly asked, putting his chin up and his eye down, as he turned to look over his dicky at George and Jack on the sofa.

"I hope I shall find something to do," replied George, blushing, as if ashamed of such presumption.

Simpson sneered, and flung down his paper in disgust. "By Cæsar! just as if there was n't enough fellows looking for places in town already! The cry is still, 'They come!'" He laughed bitterly. "What they're all thinking of — I can't understand!"

With all his diffidence, George had a fiery spirit, and this insolent language roused him.

"May I ask," he said, "what you are thinking of, sir? — for I believe you are looking for business, like a good many others."

"O, Simpson thinks he has the only right to be hunting a situation, and that all the other unfortunates are in his way!" laughed Tarball, grimly. "But I, for one, sha' n't be in his way long!"

"As if a few more or less would make any difference with me, while there are thousands — yes, sir! thousands on thousands — out of business, and crowding into the city to find something to do!" Simpson walked the room in his tight pants, and grew eloquent. "They are fools, sir! We are all fools! And what I would say to these young gentlemen," — turning to George and Jack, — "what I would say to my own brother, — is this word of warning, — No use! Go back to your country homes, if you have any; dig, plough, blow the bellows, carry water, cut wood, do anything; but don't expect to find genteel employment in town. Thank Cæsar! there 's the breakfast-bell at last!"

And the tight pants led a clattering procession down Mrs. Libby's back stairs. George and Jack brought up the rear, their appetites somewhat impaired, like their hopes, by the dark prospects and discouraging conversation of their fellow-boarders.

CHAPTER XV.

MR. MANTON'S FRIENDLY PROMISES.

MEANWHILE nothing was seen of Mr. Manton but his boots, which remained outside his chamber door nearly all the forenoon.

On coming in from another walk, between eleven and twelve o'clock, the boys saw his door partly open, and the facetious lodger himself inside, shaving before a glass. At noon he was laying out his clean linen on the bed; at half past twelve he was brushing his coat; at one he was dressed, ready for dinner, — except that a bow of his cravat and a curl of his right whisker appeared open to criticism, as he took a final turn before the glass and gave himself some finishing touches.

"How can a sane man lie abed so late, and be so long dressing?" exclaimed Jack; a question which George — who, like him, was used to getting up early and jumping into his clothes — could not answer.

Mr. Manton accosted them in a friendly manner as they passed his door, and followed them down stairs.

At the dinner-table, where he shone conspicuously as a humorist and story-teller, he made some sly

allusions to the adventure of the previous night, but refrained from entering into particulars while they remained in the room. It was not long after they had retired to their attic, however, when guffaws of male voices in the basement warned them that the joke was out.

"I don't care; it was too good to keep," said Jack, and soothed the feelings of his friend, who was inclined to take the exposure more to heart.

Along in the afternoon, Mr. Manton came to their room, and, finding them busy writing letters, offered to retire.

"Excuse me!" he said, smiling. "As you are strangers in town, I thought I might be of service to you; but I can see you any other time."

They urged him to remain, and gave him the chair. After some pleasant conversation, Jack said:—

"You may help me by giving me just a little information. I want a chance to look over a file of city newspapers of about a dozen years back." For he had resolved, if possible, to attend to that business the first thing.

"A dozen years back. City papers. Dailies or weeklies?"

"Either, or both. I am looking up a matter of business that was advertised, I suppose, about that time," Jack explained, with a blush worthy of his friend George himself.

Mr. Manton thought a moment.

"I believe a friend of mine has old files of one or

two papers; he keeps everything. Or I might take you to the office of one of the dailies. I know the 'Tribune' folks, — but, let me see! The 'Tribune' was n't published so long ago. I doubt if even the 'Herald' was; the 'Express' was n't, I know. Twelve years?"

"From eleven to thirteen years — along there," said Jack, with growing anxiety in his face.

"The 'Commercial Advertiser' is the oldest New York newspaper. But, let me see!" again said the obliging Mr. Manton. "I can take you to the office of the 'Evening Post,' and introduce you to my friend, Mr. Bryant."

"You are very kind indeed!" replied Jack, who did not fully appreciate the greatness of the proposed favor; while George regarded with sudden awe and admiration the man who could coolly call the author of "Thanotopsis" "my friend."

"You know Bryant?" murmured the young poet, who could no more have said "*Mr.* Bryant" than "Mr. Milton" or "Mr. Shakespeare."

"O, perfectly well!" Mr. Manton answered, with an easy smile. "He will give you every facility. And" — he addressed the wonder-stricken George — "is there anything I can do for *you?*"

George's first thought was, "If he will only take *me* to see Bryant!" But instantly he reflected, "What business have *I* to intrude myself upon the great man?" Then, after a moment's feverish trembling, he thought, "Yes! I will see him. I

will show him some of my poems, and *he* will tell me if there is any good in them!" So he said, "I should like to go with you, when you take my friend to the office of the 'Evening Post.'"

"Is that all?" And Mr. Manton looked as if he did not regard it as very much. "Some of the fellows down stairs said you had both come to town to find situations; and I did n't know but I might help you in that way."

"Could you?" cried Jack; "for I suppose I shall have to earn a little money while I am attending to that other business."

But George thought, "I 'll see Bryant first!"

"I don't say that I can," replied Mr. Manton, discreetly, as if afraid they would expect too much of him. "And yet it will do no harm to introduce you to some merchants of my acquaintance. A word from me will have weight; and they may know of places, even if they have none for you."

Mr. Manton then promised to go with them to see some of his friends the next morning; and soon after retired to his own room, leaving our youthful adventurers elated with hope.

"Do you believe he was in earnest?" said Jack.

"He seemed so," George replied; "there was n't a bit of that look of fun about his face we noticed last night."

"No, he is n't playing a joke on us now; I 'm sure of that," said Jack. "But does he really mean all he says?"

"I don't know; I can't somehow realize that he is a friend of Bryant's!" exclaimed George. "Perhaps I should feel that way, though, about any common mortal."

"O, I've none of that feeling!" laughed Jack. "I suppose poets, after all, are only men; there must be an every-day side to them, — a side which common folks, like Mr. Manton and me, can approach. Who knows but that, five or ten years from now, — or less even, — people will look at me with wonder and curiosity, when I speak of my friend, George Greenwood?"

"Don't poke fun at me!" said George, coloring with confusion.

Jack went on: "But I can't see the man's object in doing so much for us."

"But why should he make promises he doesn't mean to fulfil?" George argued in reply.

And both agreed that Mr. Manton was an obliging person, whom they had had the good fortune to interest in their behalf.

The letters which they were writing — George to Vinnie and Jack to Moses Chatford — now took a more cheerful tone, touching but lightly upon the pecuniary difficulties of their situation.

CHAPTER XVI.

GEORGE PEDDLES HIS MANUSCRIPTS.

ANTICIPATING the morrow, when they hoped to accomplish so much, they went to bed early that night, and slept well until awakened some hours afterwards — near morning it seemed to them — by hearing Mr. Manton come to his room. He must have groped in the dark, they thought, for he appeared to stumble against their door, and to make an unnecessary noise before getting safely inside his own.

"He 's a night-bird!" murmured George.

"Hope he won't lie abed all the forenoon to-morrow — or to-day — which is it?" replied Jack, sleepily.

It was with some anxiety that, when the morning came, they listened at his closed door, as they passed it on their way down to breakfast. It was guarded by his boots outside, and no sound came from within.

Meeting Mrs. Libby in the lower entry, they asked what time Mr. Manton might be expected down.

"Mr. Manton never breakfases with the boarders, and it 's seldom he breakfases at all," was the reply, in a feeble voice, which discouraged further questions.

After breakfast the boys held a council in their room, and concluded that, under the circumstances, — their time was now so precious, — it would be right for them to return Mr. Manton's call, and remind him of his engagement. So, reluctantly, they went to his door, and knocked at first quite softly, and with timid hearts; then louder, as they got no response; and, finally, lifted the latch and looked in.

A haggard figure, with tumbled hair, — looking so little like the sleek Mr. Manton, that for a moment they thought they had broken in upon the wrong man, — turned on the pillow, and growled hoarsely, "Who 's there?"

"I beg your pardon," said Jack, "but you promised to go with us this morning."

"Oh! it 's you."

"We are sorry to disturb you," said George. "If you can't go with us, we won't depend upon it."

"Of course I 'll go. But what 's your hurry? It's always morning till it 's afternoon. Just leave me, — set my boots inside, — I 'll get up in a few minutes."

So the boys withdrew, and lost another hour in waiting. They were both on fire with impatience, and Jack grew desperate.

"I can't afford to spend my forenoon in this way; I am going out!"

But George — who knew of no other means of access to the poet, whom he had now set his heart on seeing, except through Mr. Manton — felt less inde-

pendent, and begged his friend to wait a little longer. Irritated by the delay, they fell into a dispute, which had almost become a quarrel, when Jack broke suddenly away, and rushed out alone.

George, left to himself, was in a wretched dilemma. He almost wished that Mr. Manton had not held out any promises to them, for then he would have known just what to do. He had a large roll of manuscript poems all ready to submit to a publisher, and a few shorter pieces laid aside for the magazines and newspapers, when the advantage to be gained by first seeing Bryant had caused him to change his plans. Now the day was slipping away, and he was doing nothing. Worse than all, his mind was distressed at the thought of having wronged and grieved his friend. Waiting at last became insupportable to him, and, taking two or three small manuscripts in his pocket, he sallied forth, in no very hopeful mood.

When promenading Broadway on Saturday evening, he had entered a periodical store and taken the addresses of two magazines and three or four story-papers. He remembered now that he had done this at Jack's suggestion, "to make the most of their time."

"How wise the little fellow is! and how thoughtful of my interest!" George said to himself, remorsefully. "And just now I called him conceited, because he chanced to know better than I what we had better do. And he was right! But then, he need n't have called me a *mutton-head;* that made me mad."

He soon found his way to what was then the literary quarter of the town, and was loitering slowly along, looking for numbers and signs, when, on the corner of Nassau and Ann Streets, he met Jack.

They spoke to each other coldly — for the wounds of injurious words were still in their hearts — and passed on, almost like two strangers. That such a thing could happen so soon after their arrival in the city, where neither had a friend beside the other, and that they should thus go their ways separately, without exchanging a word of counsel or sympathy, seemed incredible to both.

"He began it by calling me a mutton-head, and he ought to be the first to come round!" said poor George to himself, his heart swelling with a passion of grief.

"Conceited, am I?" thought Jack, stubbornly fighting back the better feelings which prompted him to run after his friend and throw his arms about him, even there in the street. "He must take that back!" And he walked sullenly on.

A few minutes later, George entered the office of a magazine (we will call it the "Manhattan") which had once held a foremost place among American periodicals. He did not know that it was then in its decline. He meant to strike high. He drew from his pocket "An Autumn Day," which he considered the best of his short poems, and, in a voice tremulous with agitation, inquired for the editor. It was almost a relief to him to be told that the editor was

out, and would not be in until the afternoon. Leaving "An Autumn Day" for his inspection, and saying he would call again, George bowed bashfully to the pert young fellow occupying the editorial chair, and withdrew.

He next visited the office of the "Western Empire," a showy story-paper, and found the editor in. He sat behind a littered table, in one corner of a dirty printing-office, up several flights of stairs, and was engaged in clipping paragraphs from newspapers with a pair of shears.

As soon as he could get breath in the presence of that august person, George explained the object of his visit, and laid two manuscripts before him.

"Po'try?" said the editor, putting down his shears and taking up the verses. He was by no means an august person, except in poor George's vivid imagination; but a plain, bald-headed, civil man of business. "We're deluged with that sort of thing. I've a bushel-basket full of pomes under the table here now. 'The Mohawk Spy'—a story?—that sounds better. I'll look at that."

George's heart had sunk like lead on learning that "po'try" was such a drug in the market; but he was slightly consoled by the assurance that the story would be considered.

"When shall I call again?" he asked.

"Whenever you have anything new to offer; I shall be happy to see you."

"I mean—to learn the fate of—'The Mohawk Spy.'"



GEORGE AND THE EDITOR.

"Ah! yes; say the last of the week."

"If you could decide upon it to-morrow," said George, "you would oblige me very much, as I am in need of money."

"You expect pay for it?" said the editor of the

"Western Empire," who did not seem to have anticipated that view of the matter.

"I hoped — certainly —" began George, with burning cheeks.

The editor thereupon shoved the "Mohawk Spy" back to him across the table, as he had already shoved the "pome."

"We have only two or three paid writers. We have more gratuitous contributions from others than we can possibly use. *Young* writers can hardly expect to get paid. Good day, sir."

So saying, he took up his shears and resumed his occupation. His manner was so business-like and decisive, that George had not a word to say; and, hurt as he was, it did not occur to him that he had any just ground of complaint. Faint at heart and trembling in every limb, — almost dizzy with the blow his hopes had received, — he turned away, and descended the unswept, ill-lighted stairs to the street, saying to himself, "Business is business; if he can get contributions for nothing, why should he buy mine?"

And yet he felt a sense of wrong, which he could not define. Perhaps it was the instinctive revolt of his soul against the system of unpaid contributions, which fostered a worthless literature and enabled a shoal of trashy periodicals to live, while it starved the needy and meritorious author. Or had the shears given him a secret wound? He could not help thinking of this man filling more than half his

broad sheet with clippings for which he paid nothing; and I am not sure but he felt the shadow of a future event, which may be briefly related here.

The "Mohawk Spy" did, after all, appear in the columns of the "Western Empire," in an unforeseen and curious way. George, after much trouble, got the story published in a popular New York magazine, from which it was copied into a London periodical, where it appeared robbed of the author's name, and with the title changed to "An Adventure in the American Backwoods." The editor of the "Western Empire," finding it there, and probably not recognizing his old acquaintance, "The Mohawk Spy," recopied it, again changing the title to "A Backwoods Adventure," in which mutilated shape it afterwards "went the rounds" of the American newspaper press. When George, who watched its course, first saw it in the "Western Empire," he was highly incensed, feeling that he had not only been robbed of his property, but also of the small reputation which the connection of his name with the story should have given him. He was for going at once to the editor, — not timidly, as in his first visit, but with wrath in his bosom, — and charging him with the wrong, but on reflection he saw how foolish such a course would be; and, his anger cooling, he blamed only the injustice of the law, which protects all kinds of property but the products of an author's brain.

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. MANTON'S FRIEND.

WHEN the two boys met in their room, on coming home to dinner, both appeared low-spirited and silent. It was evident that neither had had much success in the business of the morning. Moreover, the wounds of the spirit which they had given each other still rankled, and a sullen coldness seemed to have replaced their ardent friendship.

Mr. Manton's door was partly open as they passed it, but, resenting that gentleman's treatment of them, they took no pains to learn whether he was out or in.

After dinner Jack sauntered into the parlor, and was surprised to see a lady dressed in black, with a black veil over her face, sitting by the window. She seemed to be waiting for some person to come in; and, though he was not that person, she gave him a second look, removed her veil, and greeted him with a well-remembered smile. It was the lady who had questioned him with so much tender interest when he was passing round the hat on the steamboat.

She pressed his hand warmly, and was questioning him again, in the same gentle, almost affectionate way, when suddenly her countenance changed,

and she turned to speak to one who had come in behind him. It was Mr. Manton; and it now appeared that he was the person she had been waiting to see.

He was looking very fresh, and so sleek that not a hair of his whiskers could have been thought out of place. His manner towards the lady was excessively polite, but he seemed scarcely to notice Jack, who, thinking himself in the way, quickly stole out of the room.

Climbing to his attic, he found George there before him, waiting, miserable enough.

"Maybe Mr. Manton will go with you this afternoon," said Jack, coldly.

"I don't care for Mr. Manton," replied George. Yet it was evident that he did still place some reliance on that gentleman's promises; for when told that there was a lady with him in the parlor, he watched anxiously from the window to see her go. Possibly Jack shared his hopes, for he waited also; and, whenever the street door was heard to shut, thrust his head out of the attic window, provided his friend's head was not already at that loophole of observation.

At last the lady went, — and Mr. Manton with her. Jack laughed sarcastically, but made no comment, as he tossed on his hat and walked out.

The sensitive George thought the laugh was at him, and bitterly resented it. His hands trembling with agitation, he now tied up a bundle of manu-

scripts, and went out to find a publisher for his volume of poems.

Meeting again at night, it was evident that the boys had had no better luck than in the morning. George, however, had come home without his package of manuscripts. He had found somebody willing at least to look at them.

After supper, Jack did not go up to their room; and, after waiting some time for him, George, wretchedly lonesome, went down to the parlor.

His friend was not there.

"No matter!" thought George, stifling his emotions of grief and yearning affection. "I can be as independent as he can!"

He found it hard, though, wandering about the streets, without an object, trying to amuse himself in the absence of his friend; and his heart gave a leap of joy when, an hour or two later, he met Jack crossing Broadway.

"Hello!" said Jack, "where are you going?"

"Nowhere in particular," replied George. "Where have you been all the evening?"

"Looking over an everlasting file of old newspapers;—it's an awful job," said Jack, gloomily.

"Why didn't you let me go and help you?"

"O, I didn't want to trouble you!"

While they were talking, Mr. Manton came along. They pretended not to notice him, but he rushed up to them with a flushed face and beaming smiles.

"Where have you kept yourselves all day?" he

cried. "I've been to your room to find you about fifty times; I wanted to take you around to see a friend of mine."

"We lost so much time waiting for you in the morning, we had to make it up this afternoon," said Jack.

"Besides," George added, "we saw you going off with a lady after dinner."

"Ladies have the first claim, always!" said Mr. Manton, gayly. "But I was back in an hour. In the morning I was n't well. Let me see!" — looking at his watch. "It's too late to call on Mr. Bryant this evening. I spoke to a friend of mine about you, — he will do something, — and I believe we can find him now."

George feebly objected that they had no night-key, and did n't care to be again locked out of the boarding-house.

"I have a night-key, as I believe you know," laughed Mr. Manton. "I engage to see you safely home. Come; it 's only two or three blocks."

His manner was so friendly that the boys were easily persuaded to go with him. George at last was convinced that they had blamed him wrongfully, and he regretted that it was too late to call on the great poet.

He chatted with them in a most familiar and fascinating manner, as they walked up the street together, repeating what he had said of them to his friend, and what his friend had promised in reply.

"He may be in here," said he; "let's look in." It was a refreshment saloon, in which a number of gentlemen were talking — some rather loud — at little marble-topped tables, or drinking at the bar. "He often comes here about this time for a chop; which reminds me," said Mr. Manton, "that I did n't go home to supper."

He seemed to know almost everybody in the room; he spoke privately to two or three, and then came back to where he had left the boys standing.

"He has n't come in yet. While we are waiting, let's have a glass of beer and a dish of oysters."

He seated them at a table, and was so very urgent that they finally consented to take the oysters without the beer. As for himself, nothwithstanding the discovery that he had had no supper, he took the beer without the oysters. And yet it did n't look like beer, and it had a suspicious slice of lemon in it. As this was drank before the oysters were consumed, he took another glass of "the same," as he confidentially whispered to the waiter. Then, as his friend had not yet arrived, he filled up the time by taking still another glass, his face growing all the while more flushed, and his manner more vivacious.

The third glass finished, he put his hand in his pocket, and did not appear greatly surprised at finding nothing there.

"I 'm dead beat!" he laughed. "I shall have to borrow half a dollar; I 'll hand it to you in the morning."

As he was there on the boys' business, and was planning to do so much for them, and had moreover just treated them to oysters, they could not well refuse the loan; and, of course, they could not doubt so well-dressed and polite a gentleman's promise to repay them. So they emptied their pockets of the few small coins left them of what George, in compliment to his friend, termed their "head and heels money."

Mr. Manton then called the waiter, and in the merriest manner counted out the expenses of their entertainment on the table, beginning to talk rather thickly.

"Two oys'ers, — that 's two shill's, — there 's your two oys'ers"; and he carefully placed the two shillings under two fingers. "Now, I 've had a punch, or, I b'lieve, I 've had two punch's."

"Three punches," observed the waiter.

"Is pos'ble? I 'peal to my young friends here; is three punch's or one punch's?" His young friends assuring him that it was three punches, he submitted gracefully. "Three punch's, — that 's a shill' 'n' sixpence. No! le' me count!" as the waiter offered to assist him. "I 'm determ'ned have it right. There 's your two oys'ers; there 's yer three punch's; an' I 've sixpence lef'. Boys, I 'm going to have another bran'y punch!"

They tried to dissuade him; and George even ventured to hint that he had had too many punches already. In vain: away went the waiter with the money, and returned with the fourth brandy punch.

Whilst drinking it Mr. Manton discoursed wisely to his young friends concerning the duties of life, and the snares to be shunned in a great city. He counselled them particularly not to drink gin, which was bad for the constitution; to beware of confidence men, who had a thousand tricks for getting their money; and to put themselves under the protection of some friend and patron who knew the world, like himself. Then, smacking his lips over the last drop of his last punch, he reached for the spittoon, which he mistook for his hat, laughed at the blunder, and said he hoped nobody had mistaken his hat for the spittoon; then, with the boys' assistance, finding himself "all right," he declared that he would show them the "sights" before morning.

"He 's tipsy!" Jack whispered behind his back. "We must take him home."

Walking with their friend and patron between them, the boys got him along the street very well, until, coming to a doorway that attracted his attention, he stopped, and became obstinate.

"We can't go in here," said George; "it 's getting late."

"But you can't g' 'ome 'thout me, for I 've the nigh'-key!" said Mr. Manton. "You 're boun' to go 'th me, then I 'm boun' to see you safe 'ome. My friend 's in here; I *mus'* int'duce ye to 'm!"

As he insisted on going in, they reluctantly entered with him, mounted a dark flight of stairs, and came to a door at which he gave a peculiar knock.



Mr. Manton's Friend.

It was opened, and in a moment they found themselves in a blaze of light, amidst groups of loungers, card-players, and men throwing dice or shaking props.

"It's a gambling saloon!" Jack whispered to the astonished George.

Here again Mr. Manton appeared to know everybody, and to be quite at home. After speaking to several persons, and glancing at the different groups, he smilingly invited the boys to lend him another half-dollar, with which he was certain of winning for them a very large sum. He felt it in his bones, he said; and when he felt that way he was always sure to win.

George was explaining that they had given him all their money already, when Jack suddenly started and caught his arm.

"Do you see that man over there?"

"Which? where?"

"At the farther table — his coat buttoned to his chin," said Jack, excitedly. "It's my old acquaintance, the 'Lectrical 'Lixir man! — good-natered John Wilkins!"

But George, who was looking at the wrong man, gasped out, —

"I know him! It's that rascal — the pickpocket — who got our money!"

"Who is?" said Mr. Manton.

Jack had by this time discovered and recognized the rogue, who was at the same table with Wilkins;

and he united with George in pointing him out to their companion.

"That?" cried Mr. Manton, with a laugh. "Good joke! Why, that 's my friend; wonder I did n't see him before! That 's one of the ge'l'men I want to int'duce you to!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW MR. MANTON TOOK THE BOYS HOME.

BOTH George and Jack were intensely excited, and Jack was for rushing out at once and calling a policeman to take charge of Mr. Manton's friend. But Mr. Manton only laughed at them.

"You 're greatly mistaken," he said, "and that shows your ignorance of the world. He 's one of the finest ge'l'men. MacPheeler! See here, MacPheeler!"

MacPheeler gave Manton an impatient look, and went on shuffling a pack of cards.

"A grave accusation 'gainst you, MacPheeler!" cried Manton, with his most amused expression. "These young men 'cuse you of picking their pockets."

Thereupon MacPheeler, noticing the boys for the first time, dropped the cards, and rose abruptly from the table with a startled look, which quickly changed to an insinuating smile.

"What fun is this, Manton?" he inquired.

"Do you know these young men?"

"I am not aware that I ever had the pleasure of meeting them before."

"You don't remember?" cried Jack. "But we

do! and we'll thank you to give us back our money."

"Your money?" echoed MacPheeler, in the greatest astonishment. "Why, Manton, what *is* the meaning of all this?"

"Perhaps you are not the man who pretended to be in a fit, on the steamboat at Albany, and who picked our pockets when we were taking him ashore!" exclaimed Jack.

"If I am, it must have been a good while ago," replied MacPheeler, coolly. "I haven't been in Albany for two years. This is a curious mistake, Manton!"

"All the more strange," said Manton, "since I was bringing these young friends of mine to int'duce 'em to you, for you to help 'em to a situation, through your stensive business 'quaintance."

"Certainly," said MacPheeler. "Anything to oblige you, Manton."

"There! what did I tell you?" said Mr. Manton. "You see, boys, what a blunder you've made! MacPheeler has n't been in Albany for two years; I can swear to that."

But the boys were not convinced. MacPheeler's face, his dress, his hat (for he had his hat on), — everything about him reminded them of the pick-pocket; and George — who, though at times so timid, was full of courage and resolution on great occasions — said firmly, "Will you have the kindness to let me look at the ring on the hand you hold behind you?"

"Certainly," replied MacPheeler, with the most perfect unconcern. "Did you ever see it before?"

"I — thought I had," said George, bending over the outstretched hand. "It is just such a ring, but there was a diamond in it. There's the place for a stone!"

"That setting held a ruby once, — never a diamond," said MacPheeler. "You remember the ruby, Manton?"

"O, perfectly well!" said Manton.

MacPheeler then remarked pleasantly that, though he had often been taken for other men, he had never before passed for a pickpocket, and proposed that they should sit down and discuss the joke over something to drink. The boys declined the treat; but Manton accepted with cheerful alacrity, and two glasses of brandy-and-water were brought. While the two gentlemen were drinking together, Jack looked for the 'Lectrical 'Lixir man, of whom he hoped to hear something about Phineas, but he had disappeared.

"What shall we do?" whispered George.

"I don't know," replied Jack. "I believe this is the rogue, but we've no proof."

"He has just such white hands, and long, slim fingers," muttered George. "But I don't see that we can do anything."

"Let's keep track of him, if we can," said Jack. "I'll ask for his address, so that we can call on him, for the situations, you know."

The gentleman seemed to anticipate this request; for, as the boys approached, he held out to them, between his delicate thumb and finger, a neat card, bearing his name, *Alex. MacPheeler*, saying, "Inquire for me at Lindley's Employment Rooms, on Chatham Street, after eleven o'clock. Happy to serve you."

As this was all the satisfaction they were likely to get at present, they took leave, with a promise to call on him, and after a good deal of trouble and delay got Mr. Manton started for home.

Exercise, and the encounter with MacPheeler, had served to sober their friend and patron for a while; but his last glass had made him merrier even than before. He was inclined to sing snatches of jolly songs as the boys, one at each side, guided his unsteady steps along the street. Sometimes he would burst into fits of whimsical laughter at their blunder in mistaking his friend MacPheeler — "one of the bes' men in the world" — for a pickpocket. Then he would assume the air of a mentor, halt on the sidewalk, square off at the boys, and lecture them.

"What s'prises me," said he, preaching to Jack, while George held him up, "is your utter ig'rance of the world! You need sperience; you mus' 'quire sperience, and the pol'sh of s'ciety."

"We are getting experience and the polish of society pretty fast!" said Jack, seizing the gesticulating arm. "Come along home."

"Wait till I 've spressed my sentiments!" cried Mr. Manton, now supported by Jack, while he turned and preached to George. "One thing of firs' impor'nce is dress. My young friend, you must have a better coat, if you 're going to mix with genteel s'ciety. I never can int'duce you to my friend Mr. Bry'nt, in such short sleeves. What would my friend Mr. Bry'nt say, if I should say to my friend Mr. Bry'nt, — 'Mr. Bry'nt, this is my young friend'; and Mr. Bry'nt should look at those sleeves; for Mr. Bry'nt knows me, and knows I 'sociate only with ge'l'men."

This discourse was of a nature to touch George in a tender spot; and he felt it all the more because of a number of by-standers who had stopped in the street to be entertained by Mr. Manton's maudlin vehemence. Nor was it soothing to know that the truth which now came out in words, when the man was fuddled, must have existed all along in his silent thoughts when he was sober. Burning with confusion and anger, George once more grasped the arm that had freed itself, and assisted Jack in the difficult navigation of their friend and patron along that billowy sea, the sidewalk.

When it became necessary to cross the street, Mr. Manton shook himself clear of both supporters, and squared off again, with his back against a lamp-post.

"Now, with regard to crossing a street, I can lay down a pri'ciple that 'll be useful to you all

your lives. *Cross when you can — not when you must.* For, don't you see? when you must, then maybe you can't. Vehicles, you know. Le' 's take a drink."

"You 've had too much already," said George.

"That 's so; I 've had too much, or else I have n't had enough. I 'm just a little smashed, and I want another glass to sober me. Len' me a quarter."

"You 've taken all our money, and got drunk with it," said Jack, seizing him again. "Now, come home!"

"Home? At this hour? That 's child's talk!"

"But *we* 're going," cried George. "You may come with us or not, as you please."

"But I 've got the nigh'-key!" returned the friend and patron, with a cunning laugh.

"No matter; we 'll take our chance of getting in," said Jack. "Stay in the gutter, if you like, to be picked up by the next policeman. — Come, George!"

"Look here! you won't desert a friend in this way, will you? I 'll go; I promised to see you safe 'ome, an' I will. Hook on here!"

Fortunately, another of Mrs. Libby's boarders appeared just then, with whose assistance they got Mr. Manton home and put him to bed.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE QUARREL MADE UP.

"I DON'T know what we should ever have done without you, Mr. Timkins!" exclaimed Jack, as, this duty performed, they retired from Mr. Manton's door. "We've had a fearful time with that man!"

Timkins followed the boys into their attic, and looked about him with his chin canted, first one way and then the other, over the edge of his shirt-collar. He seated himself in the chair, midway between Jack, on the bedside, and George, on the trunk, and asked how it happened.

"In the first place," replied George, "he promised to help us find situations."

"And was going to introduce you to some of his influential friends?" said Timkins, with his chin over his dicky, looking at George. "Then he asked you to take a drink with him, and borrowed money of you to pay the bill?" with his chin over the other side of his dicky, looking at Jack. "Of course; then he proposed to show you the sights?"

"That's about the way of it," said Jack, surprised. "But how did you know?"

"He runs that rig with every new boarder. Played it on me once!"

"How does he live? What supports him?"

"He has a brother, who pays his board and tailor's bills. He has set him up in business two or three times, on his promise not to drink or gamble any more. But it's no use."

"He has no money, then?"

"Not unless he gets some foolish fellow to lend him some."

George and Jack looked at each other, and thought of their last half-dollar.

"I don't think the man means any harm," said Timkins. "He really knows almost everybody; and he's very friendly and sociable, — likes to make big promises. I hope he didn't get very deep into you?" And the chin slid up interrogatively over Jack's side of the shirt-collar.

"Only half a dollar," said Jack.

"But it was every cent we had!" added George, dismally.

"Sho! that's bad!" And the Timkins chin went up, and the Timkins eye glanced down, on George's side.

"But who was the lady who called on him to-day?" Jack inquired.

"Was there one? It must have been his wife."

"His wife! That beautiful woman! No, not beautiful, exactly, but — you know!"

"Nice woman, I'm told," said Timkins. "But she can't live with him. He has no conscience, — that's the trouble with Manton. Rum, you know."

The boys were overwhelmed with pity and chagrin, at this account of their gay friend and patron.

"I felt all the time there was something wrong about him," said George, after Timkins had retired. "But, then, he talked so fair, and I *wanted* to believe him!"

"Oh! but is n't it too bad?" said Jack. "Think of that woman — his wife! I tell you, George, if a man lets rum get the mastery of him, it makes little difference what station of society he is in. I 've seen drunkards enough in low life, but I never saw a sadder wreck than this handsome, witty Mr. Manton!"

"He would go low enough, if it was n't for his brother who keeps him up," replied George. "We shall never see our money again."

Jack took a few quick turns about the little room, moved by strong emotion. Then he walked up to his friend.

"George!" he exclaimed, "we 've been a couple of fools!"

"I am the biggest fool!" said George. "We should have given him up, — I am sure we should have saved our money, — if it had n't been for me."

"I don't mean that," replied Jack. "We can't always help being deceived. And, for my part, I can stand anything that happens, which I am not to blame for. But we *were* to blame for quarrelling. And I was the most to blame. I called you hard names."

"No!" cried George, his voice broken with rising sobs, "I am just what you called me. I am — I was — a muttonhead! You were quite right; you *do* know more than I! Forgive me, Jack, for calling you conceited!" And poor George, grasping his friend's two hands, broke forth in a fit of manly weeping.

Jack, whose feelings were, I suppose, no less deep, though he possessed more self-control, dashed away a few tears, choked back the rest that would have come, and answered in tones of earnest self-condemnation: —

"I believe I am the most self-conceited upstart under the sun! Because, from a miserable little driver on the canal, I rose to be — as I thought — somebody, I imagined I knew more than anybody else. If I had followed Mr. Chatford's advice, I should not be here."

"I am glad you did n't," murmured George, "for, then, you would never have met me."

"Good may come out of it, — I needed this lesson, — but, nevertheless," Jack went on, "I have acted like a confirmed idiot. Mr. Chatford said there might be some mistake about what Molly told me; either she or Mother Hazard might have lied. He said the way to do was to put the case into the hands of somebody here in New York, while I stayed at home. But we knew of nobody, and I was in such a hurry, — I am the most impulsive little simpleton in existence!" exclaimed Jack. "Off I

came; had my pocket picked the first thing; and now I have found all the difficulties in the way which he predicted, and more. That 's the kind of fellow I am, — conceited enough, I tell you!"

George threw his arms about him. "O Jack! dear Jack! never mind! Everybody is liable to make mistakes. But I — I feel as if I could meet anything, and brave anything, now that we are friends again. You don't know how wretched our quarrel made me!"

"Did it? I fancied you did n't care. Well, it 's over now!" said Jack, the cloud passing from his brow. "No matter for Mr. Manton, and the half-dollar; if we stick together, George, — and we *will* stick together! — let come what will, we shall get through all right, somehow."

"You are a wonderful fellow!" exclaimed George, laughing through his tears. "Now that we are friends once more, I believe I was never happier in my life."

Strong in this sense of mutual affection and support, the boys went to bed, and slept well, and dreamed pleasant dreams, in spite of their misfortunes in the past, and the dubious future that still awaited them.

CHAPTER XX.

HOW GEORGE AND JACK EARNED A SHILLING.

AFTER dinner, the next day, George and Jack, who had been about their separate affairs all the morning, set out together to find Lindley's Employment Rooms, in Chatham Street, and to call on Mr. Alex. MacPheeler.

They were prompted to this quite as much, perhaps, by curiosity, as by any other motive. Of course, they had no hope of recovering their lost pocket-books; but they thought they would like to know where Mr. MacPheeler was to be found, and what he would propose to do for them. "And who knows," said George, "but that we may be glad enough, if everything else fails, to have him help us to any sort of a situation?"

Jack laughed. "I have had enough of Mr. Manton's promises; and I sha'n't be fooled by those of any friend of his, — especially such a friend as MacPheeler! But come on. Maybe we shall find out something."

The Employment Rooms consisted of one good-sized front chamber, up one flight of stairs, and a private office leading out of it. As the lads entered the first room, a tall, dark gentleman, with very

black hair and whiskers, came out of the second room, and, with a smile of insinuating softness, inquired what he could do for them.

"We wish to see Mr. MacPheeler," said Jack, producing that gentleman's card.

The insinuating smile vanished, and, with a stern look, which seemed more natural to his features, the tall man turned on his heel.

"Is he in?" the boys inquired.

"Mr. MacPheeler is *not* in," said the tall gentleman, turning again, and confronting them loftily and coldly.

"He said we should find him here," urged George. "Can you tell us where he is?"

"I have no information to give regarding Mr. MacPheeler," was the formal and chilling response.

A happy thought occurred to Jack, and he asked, —

"Has he returned from Albany?"

"I cannot say that he has returned from Albany."

"We saw him there last week, and had the pleasure of making his acquaintance," Jack went on, with an audacious smile.

"That is quite possible. Mr. MacPheeler is often in Albany," said the tall man, bending stiffly. "If you have any message for him, I will take it."

"He promised to help us to situations," suggested George.

"Ah!" The tall form bent more and more, and the insinuating smile returned. "That is another affair. That is *my* affair. One dollar apiece, young gentlemen, and your names go on my list. I am Mr. Lindley."

Jack appeared to hesitate. "Does Mr. MacPheeler often come here?"

"He does. But I have not seen him since he went to Albany last Friday. He may have returned yesterday. But he can do nothing about the situations, except through me."

"What shall we be sure of, if we pay our dollars?" George asked.

"Of very good clerkships, when your turns come. That may be in a week, or it may be in two weeks, according to circumstances. For one dollar, I insure nobody anything. For twenty-five dollars apiece, I insure you clerkships, with salaries ranging from three to five hundred dollars a year. For fifty dollars, salaries double those amounts. Better have your places insured, by all means."

"Money in advance?" said Jack.

"Invariably in advance." And Mr. Lindley bowed graciously.

"How would it do," said Jack, "for you to get us the situations, and then take the pay for your trouble out of our salaries?"

"That," replied Mr. Lindley, politely but firmly, "would not answer my purpose."

The conversation — somewhat to the relief of the

boys, it must be owned — was here interrupted by the entrance of a somewhat stoutish, blustering gentleman, with a hooked nose, a very red face, and a curious defect in his left eye, the lids of which stuck together and then peeled open comically, as he marched fiercely up to Mr. Lindley.

"My name is Fitz Dingle!" he said, or rather shouted, in a menacing way, pompously inflating his waistcoat (which was a soiled white waistcoat), and slapping it with a soiled kid glove.

"Nobody disputes that fact," said Mr. Lindley, coolly.

"I have come to see about that trunk!" cried the fierce Fitz Dingle.

"May I be so bold as to inquire what trunk?" rejoined the placid Lindley.

"Goffer's trunk. I sent for it this morning, — sent Goffer's order. Now I 've come myself."

"I *have* a trunk here, Mr. Fitz Dingle, pledged by one Thomas Goffer, in default of twenty-five dollars, which he was to pay me for getting him a situation."

"But you never got him a situation!"

"No matter. I was to get him one. It was a contract. I stand ready to fulfil my part of it, and I exact his part."

"Mr. Rudolph Lindley!" roared Fitz Dingle, — and the contrast between the impetuous violence of the man and the extremely deliberate peeling apart of his left eyelids was, to say the least, remarkable, — "you 're a humbug, and you 're em-

ployment business is a swindle. I 've heard of your taking money from persons for getting them situations, but I never heard of your getting one a situation yet. I've come for that trunk; and either that trunk goes with me down these stairs, or you go headforemost out of your own front-window. Take your choice."

And with one eye temporarily sealed, and the other flashing fire for two, Fitz Dingle began to strip up his sleeves, as if for business.

Mr. Lindley turned pale, till the preternatural black of his whiskers appeared all the more striking in contrast with his unwholesome, sallow skin. But he did not lose his self-command.

"I do not stoop to dispute with such men about trifles," he answered loftily. "Here 's the trunk; the sooner you take it away the better." And with his own hand he dragged it out of the inner office.

"Give us a lift here, young fellows, will you?" said Fitz Dingle.

The boys were quite willing, and, laying hold of the handles, they bore the trunk out of the room and down the stairs; while Fitz Dingle imparted, in a very emphatic manner, to Mr. Rudolph Lindley, his opinion (more in detail) of that gentleman and his relations to the public.

"Now one of you run to the corner for a hack, and here 's a couple of tickets to one of the most elegant places of entertainment in the metropolis, — Fitz Dingle's Colored Minstrels, Bowery Hall.



THE BOYS ASSIST MR. FITZ DINGLE.

I hope you have n't been paying this scoundrel up stairs any money."

"Luckily for us, we have n't any to pay," said Jack, laughing. "Thank you," declining the proffered reward; "we are already under obligations to you for tickets, which we have n't used."

"Ah? I think — yes, I remember you now!" cried Fitz Dingle. "The young fellow with the pair of heels! What a mistake you made, not to accept my offer! 'T was such an opening for a person of your talent! You would have made fame and fortune, — fame and fortune, sir, quick as a wink."

Jack thought if it were no quicker than the wink of the eye which was just then struggling to come open, his acquisition of fame and fortune would have been slow enough. But he said, smiling: —

"Perhaps it is n't too late now?"

"I fear it is too late," replied Fitz Dingle. "I've engaged another man, — Goffer, owner of this trunk, and a good pair of legs; but I am free to say, not *your* legs."

"I should be sorry to have Goffer, or any other man, own my legs," said Jack. "But I had about made up my mind, that if you would hire them, as you proposed the other day — "

Fitz Dingle shook his head; and Jack, who had of late been thinking that to accept this man's offer was his only resource, felt his hopes sink.

"My troupe is full now, — the finest combination of artists in this or any other country!" said Fitz Dingle, proudly. "Come and see. And give me your address. Something may turn up."

George, who had gone for the hack, now returned with it, and Fitz Dingle stepped inside.

"Let me see!" he remarked, with one eye closed and the other hidden behind his hooked nose.

"Since you did n't care for the tickets" (thrusting a hand in his pocket), "here 's a shilling to divide between you. Good day. Remember Fitz Dingle! — Bowery Hall," he said to the driver. And the hack rattled away.

"I 've lost that chance!" said Jack, rather gloomily. "Goffer's legs have got the start of mine. George, we must do something desperate!"

"How would it do to take another trip up the river?" suggested George, timidly.

"And give the passengers a little more music and dancing? I 've thought of that. But we 've no money to pay our passage, and we might make a failure the second time; the officers of the boat might forbid the exhibition, or the passengers might not be so much interested in us as they were when it was known we had just had our pockets picked. But I 've another idea."

"What?"

"We can go down to the steamboat-landing this evening, and perhaps get one or two jobs at handling trunks. For my part, I 'm ready for any honest work."

"So am I," said George, though with a blush at the thought of joining the vociferous throng of porters and hackmen at the steamboat wharf. "And I 've learned this, — that we have only ourselves to rely on. This Lindley is a rogue, — no better than a pickpocket himself. How shrewdly you got out of him the fact that MacPheeler was in

Albany last week, where MacPheeler said he had n't been for two years!"

"You see," said Jack, "such fellows as MacPheeler have no settled place of residence; the police might find them at any time, if they had. But their friends can hear of them through some mutual friend, like this Lindley. I wish we had some better proof against him; then we would keep watch, and trap Mr. Alex. MacPheeler yet."

But any plan of thus recovering their stolen money seemed to both boys utterly hopeless. So, as they crossed the Park, they turned their attention to other schemes of bettering their fortunes.

Suddenly Jack laid hold of his friend's shoulder, and stopped short.

"See here, George! How would it do for us to go around to some of the big hotels in the evening, and give them a little music and dancing? I think we can pick up some money that way."

George confessed that the idea had occurred to him. "But I hope we sha' n't be driven to that, — here, where we may become known!" he said. "I 'm going now to see a book-publisher and one or two editors. I 'll try what can be done with them first."

CHAPTER XXI.

GEORGE AND THE BOOKSELLER.

JACK returned to his files of old newspapers, and George went to call on a bookseller in Nassau Street, with whom he had left his bundle of manuscripts the day before.

He was a kind-hearted man, who had been so much interested in George's appearance that, without entertaining much hope of being able to make a paying book out of the mass of verses submitted to him, he had consented to examine them, from mere goodwill.

He was writing a letter at a desk in the back part of his store, when the tall young poet reappeared. Having motioned him to a chair, he continued writing. George took up a newspaper, and pretended to be reading at his ease, while he was, in fact, suffering from terrible anxiety and suspense.

At length, the letter finished, the bookseller lifted the lid of his desk, and took out the package of manuscripts.

"I am sorry," he began, and hesitated, turning over the leaves of the manuscripts. George nerved himself to bear his fate and look calm. "Sorry I can't say of these things what you would like to have me

say," the bookseller added kindly. "But you are young yet. It would be very remarkable, indeed, if you could produce a volume of poems which the public would care to buy and read. Five years from now you will thank me more for not printing these verses than you would now for printing them."

George managed to shape his features into a sickly smile, and replied with an effort, "I dare say you find them mere trifles."

"Well, — yes, — and no," said the man of books, who appeared anxious to temper the wind of his criticism to the shorn lamb who shiveringly awaited it. "There 's merit in some of the verses, but they have nearly all one great fault, — there is too great facility of versification."

"I — I was not aware," George ventured to reply, "that one could have too great facility of versification, if one versifies at all."

"What I mean is this: Your language glides along too easily. You hurry on after your rhymes and fancies, — you go skipping and dancing like a brook, from pebble to pebble, — all pretty and musical, but there is no great depth. A little of that sort of thing is agreeable, but you give us too much of it. We grow weary; we want less music, and more meaning."

"I think I see your objection," confessed poor George, who immediately began to regard his poetical compositions as a mass of wordy and empty rubbish.

The bookseller, looking as if it gave him quite as much pain to say what he did as it gave George to hear him, went on.

"Nearly everything here, that I have had time to look at, reminds me of either Scott or Byron, with here and there a touch of Burns. I venture to say these are your three favorite poets."

George admitted that they were.

"Now, what you need, is to read other poets, or none at all, for a little while. Don't give us any more feeble echoes of anybody. Put a curb on your too lively fancy. Condense — condense — condense. Prune — prune — prune. Go deeper into the subjects you write upon; think more of the substance, and less of the fluency of your lines. Now, here is one little thing." And the bookseller drew out a piece, entitled "The Old Meeting-House," from amid the "Fugitive Leaves."

"I never thought much of that," said George. "A homely subject, — I don't know why I left it with the rest."

"I dare say you think it the poorest piece of all."

"I am sure it is."

"And yet, I think you felt a secret pleasure in writing it."

"Perhaps I did, — yes," said George, "there was something about it pleasing to me; but I never fancied it would please anybody else very much."

"That," said the bookseller, with a smile, "is a poem."

"You think so!" cried George, with a look of astonishment.

"It is the one original piece in the lot. You were writing of what you knew something about, and every stroke tells. You make us see the picture, for you saw it clearly and strongly yourself. We hear the old bell tolling in the belfry. We see the tall and gaunt old bell-ringer in the porch below. The wagons driving up to the meeting-house steps; the country people, a little stiff in their best clothes, and with their grave Sunday faces, passing down the aisle, and entering the pews; the good old minister, and the sermon, which seems so long to the little boys on the hard seats; the singing of the choir; the birds singing outside; — why, you make us see and feel everything, even to the doves that alight on the window-sill, and the bad boys trading jack-knives in the wagons under the sheds. You did not run so much to pretty fancies in this, because you were so full of the subject. You were at home in 'The Old Meeting-House,' but not in 'Golboda: a Romance of the African Coast.' 'T is a poem, — a little loose in some of the lines, here and there, — but still a poem. If you had worked a week at it, instead of a few hours, as you probably did, you would have made something striking and excellent."

"You really think, then," said George, with rekindling hope, "that I have some — talent?"

"A great deal," replied the bookseller, cordially.

"And that I can hope to — to earn something with my pen?"

"That is another thing. Poetry — even good poetry — is n't a commodity that it pays very well for anybody to write. A few poets have received large sums for their verses, but they are the rare exceptions. Hundreds fail where a single one succeeds. No, my dear sir, don't think of relying upon poetry for a livelihood."

"I have sometimes written a little prose, — essays, stories," faltered George. And he timidly took "The Mohawk Spy" from his pocket.

"This is more like what the newspapers and magazines are willing to pay money for," said the bookseller, glancing at the manuscript.

He read a passage here and there. George watched him with an anxiety so keen that it was almost anguish. Of this man's good-will and sound judgment he was so thoroughly convinced, that it seemed to him almost as if his life depended on the sentence about to fall from his lips.

"I take it, you are a stranger in the city," remarked the bookseller.

"A perfect stranger."

"And you have not an abundant supply of means?"

George was prompted to reply that he and his friend had a shilling between them, earned by carrying a trunk; but his characteristic diffidence — or shall we call it false shame? — checked the confession.

"I am dependent on my own exertions for

my bread," was his more elegant way of putting it.

"And you have no other employment except writing?"

"None."

"But there is nobody dependent on you for a support? That is fortunate. I see that the pursuit of literature, in some form, is a passion with you; and it would be useless for me to attempt to dissuade you from it. If you are virtuous and frugal and hardy and heroic, there is hope of your final success. Meanwhile, you must be prepared to encounter slights, disappointments, privations. No matter how hard your bed and how bitter your crust: a soldier of fortune can sleep beneath the stars. But, if at any time you suspect that money is sweeter than the Muse, — if you prefer luxurious habits to a life of patient and prudent industry, — then say good by to the pen, and try almost any other occupation."

In George's eyes shone bright tears, as he replied, in tones thrilling with a fine enthusiasm, "Give me literature and daily bread, before honors, riches, everything! That 's my choice."

"Then I say, God speed you!" replied the bookseller, with a sympathetic glimmer in his own eyes. "Meanwhile, don't be afraid of turning your hand to any other occupation, however humble, to earn the necessary bread, till you have gained a foothold in literature."

"I have made up my mind to that," said George,

whose heart, so lately despairing, was now fired with heroic resolution.

"Come with me," then said the bookseller, putting on his hat.

George followed, wonderingly, as this new, wise, and kind friend conducted him a short distance down the street, and then up two flights of office stairs, to a door, on which were lettered the words, so charming to the young poet's fancy: —

UPTON'S LITERARY MAGAZINE. — EDITOR'S ROOM.

Mr. Upton was in, — a fleshy young man, of a rather dashy appearance, — and George was introduced, with a kind word from the bookseller, who then withdrew.

"I will read your manuscript to-night," said the editor. (It was "The Mohawk Spy," which George had placed in his hands.) "I hope it is a good story; for I am in want of a few first-rate, capital stories, — something out of the beaten track."

George said he hoped he might have the pleasure of writing a few such for him; since, if the magazine needed the articles, he needed the pay for them still more. He remembered his experience with the "Western Empire," and thought it best to have the mercantile part of the transaction understood at once.

"My magazine is a new thing, — hardly established yet, and I can't afford the prices now which I mean to pay by and by. I pay a dollar a page, when the

article is published. I hope this arrangement will suit you, and that your articles will suit the magazine."

George, glad of the prospect of any pay in the future, expressed himself satisfied, and went home, feeling — as he said to Jack afterwards — like a youth who had gone out in search of a castle in the air, and found himself at night only too happy to lay his head in a hut.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN EVENING AT BOWERY HALL.

GEORGE was indeed so much encouraged by the prospect of gaining a subsistence with his pen, that he quite abandoned the idea of earning more shillings by carrying trunks, or of playing the flute to Jack's dancing, at some of the great hotels.

"Wait, at all events, till I hear from my manuscript to-morrow," he urged.

"But you don't expect to get pay for it to-morrow," Jack argued. "The week is slipping away, another board-bill will be due Saturday evening, and how are we going to meet it?"

"If I can get *one* piece accepted, that will make an opening for me elsewhere, and the money will begin to come in."

"Yes, to you, perhaps, but not to me. What am *I* going to do?"

"If I earn anything, it will be the same as if you earned it, you know," said George.

"I *don't* know!" exclaimed Jack. "I must be doing something to pay my way, till I get through with my business here. I don't yet give that up. When I do, then I give up New York too, and work my passage on the boats straight back to Mr. Chat-

ford's. But I sha' n't run in debt, in the mean while, if I can help it, — not even to you, George, generous as you are! And *you* may be counting chickens that will never be hatched," Jack added, with a rather desolate smile.

"They 'll be hatched some time," cried George, confidently.

He went to the attic door to answer a rap.

A servant-girl handed in a note, which, she said, a boy had just left at the door for the "young gentleman."

"For me?" said George, eagerly, thinking it must be from some editor he had called on, and that it contained tidings of fortune. But the note was addressed to Jack.

Greatly surprised, Jack opened it, and read as follows: —

BOWERY HALL, Tuesday P. M.

DEAR SIR: Call and See me this Evening. My Triangle is sick, and I have a Magnificent Idea. — Resp'lly,

LUCIUS FITZ DINGLE,
Proprietor Colored Artist Troupe.

"His triangle sick!" cried Jack. "Who ever heard of a sick triangle?"

"It can't be triangle!" said George, taking the letter. "It is, though!" And for a while both boys were as much puzzled as if Fitz Dingle had gravely informed them that his rhomboid had the measles, or his hypothenuse was down with a fever. "I have

it!" George suddenly exclaimed. "A triangle is a kind of musical instrument."

"So it is!" laughed Jack. "And he means the member of his troupe who plays it. I'm not glad," he added, gleefully, "that a triangle, or any other geometrical figure, should be laid up with sickness; but I'm going around to Bowery Hall, to see what this affliction has to do with me."

"If you can work into his 'magnificent idea,' then we are in clover," said George, — "you with your heels, and I with my pen!"

Jack insisted on his friend's accompanying him, and they set out for Bowery Hall.

The place was easily found. Approaching, they saw from afar off, through the mist (for it was a drizzly evening), a huge transparency over the sidewalk, painted with the life-size figure of a colored minstrel playing a banjo, and grinning with a marvellous display of ivory, on a glowing background of gas-lit canvas. Beneath this they passed into a broad doorway, mounted a flight of stairs, and presented their tickets to the foremost of two men who stood just inside the entrance door of the hall.

"Keep your tickets — keep your tickets; pass right in — pass right in," cried the second man, with one good eye winking keenly at them over a hooked nose, while the lids of the other were peeling slowly apart. "Welcome to Bowery Hall! I'll talk with you by and by. Walk right in — walk right in; you'll see what a unique and elegant show it is!"

And Mr. Fitz Dingle (for we recognize that enterprising proprietor) took the trouble to conduct them to eligible seats, placarded "RESERVED," well down in front.

The hall did not strike the boys as particularly elegant. Neither was the display of fashion on the part of the spectators so dazzling as might have been expected. The audience was good-humored, and somewhat coarse and loud, and addicted overmuch to caterwauling and peanuts.

That the place was not ventilated in the most approved modern style soon became apparent. At the same time, into the dim atmosphere of steam and dust from the assembling crowd, went up a terrific noise of stamping and hooting and whistling from youthful spectators, who found it necessary thus to give vent to their excessive vitality while waiting for the performance to begin. A rattling piano, which did service in place of orchestra, struggled heroically against the overwhelming torrent of confused noises, and sometimes went down with a faint tinkle scarcely heard amid the breakers, and sometimes rode triumphantly on a lull.

At length the curtain rose, discovering the minstrels seated in a semicircle fronting the audience. Their faces were very black, their shirt-collars very large and very white, and their coats and trousers all much too long or much too short, or designed in some other way to produce a burlesque effect.

These artists were five in number, and each was

provided with some instrument of music. There were a banjo, a set of bones, a bass-viol, a fiddle, and a flute. The audience and the piano were silenced, and there was a hush of expectation, broken by the rich bass voice of one of the performers: —

"Good morning, Dandy Jim!"

"Good morning yourself, Mr. Jones," replied the mellow tenor of Dandy Jim.

"I 've cogitated one or two skientific questions I 'd like to dispose to you and the other gentlemen of the profession," continued Mr. Jones.

He was invited to "elucidate"; and thereupon followed two or three conundrums and other small jokes, hardly of a nature to be transferred to these pages. They had the desired effect, however, of making the audience laugh. Then Mr. Jones inquired: —

"How about that song I heard you singing under your lady's window last night, Dandy Jim?"

After considerable dispute about the lady's window, and many bashful excuses on the part of the sentimental Jim, when urged to favor the company with the said song, Mr. Jones proposed that they should keep him in countenance by all singing together. This agreed upon, the whole troupe burst into a chorus of melody, which so encouraged and inspired Jim, that he was afterwards enabled to perform his solo, with a banjo accompaniment, in a manner which brought out uproarious applause from the audience.

Then came more conundrums, and then more vocal and instrumental music, accompanied by some really comical acting.

"I don't wonder Fitz Dingle boasted he had the best Bones in this or any other country!" said George, laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks. "Look at the fellow!"

After Dandy Jim had melodiously informed the audience that he was "the best-looking nigger in the county, O!" and the remarkable fact that Nellie Bly was in the habit of shutting her eye when she went to sleep, had become pretty well established, — and Susannah had been pathetically entreated not to weep for the young man who was going to Alabama with his banjo on his knee, — there was a lull in the songs and conundrums, which was presently enlivened by a new arrival.

A very tall and slim, and very awkward plantation darky entered upon the scene, staring about him in a way which indicated inexperience of the world. Some coarse jokes passed between him and his more polite and better informed brethren; when, after walking around them, and staring with stupid wonder at their coat-tails and shirt-collars, as if he had never seen fashionably dressed darkies before, he wished to be enlightened as to that "quar, long-handled skillet with strings," which Dandy Jim held in his hand. His thirst for knowledge was gratified by the information that it was a banjo. He then wished to know "what it was fer"; at which simple

questions Bones seemed in imminent danger of turning himself inside out with excessive merriment. Dandy Jim, by way of explanation, obligingly touched a string. At the first note, the electrified questioner leaped — his length of limb proving favorable to the movement — half across the stage. At the second note, he leaped as far in another direction. At a third touch, — which Dandy Jim ventured, reckless of consequences, — he jumped completely over Bones, who keeled from his seat to the floor in shrieking hysterics, and came up chattering and gibbering and snapping his eyes, more like a terrified ape than anything human.

Dandy Jim gradually passed from his *staccato* prelude into a lively plantation jig, which carried the long-limbed leaper with it into a dance, which made George and Jack nudge each other hard.

"He 's the new man!" "It 's Goffer!" they whispered to each other.

It was now his brother artists' turn to be overcome by wonder and admiration, which Bones, particularly, illustrated by some very laughable performances. He hopped about the dancer like a toad; now stretching up tall to look over him, now crouching low to look under his feet, and even getting leaped over two or three times when curiosity carried him too far. All the while he kept up an amusing accompaniment with his clappers, which advanced with cautious clicks, or rattled with starts of astonishment, or whirled off in fits of insane rapture, expressive of the mixed emotions of his soul.

The new-comer wound up by snatching the banjo, and picking the strings to his own dancing; which feat so overcame Bones, that he tumbled flat upon his back, and clappered and kicked with legs and arms in the air.

"That's good," commented George, when the dance was near its conclusion; "but it is n't *you!*"

"It 's great jumping, but not what I call —"

Jack had got so far in his criticism, when a young man touched him on the shoulder, and said that Mr. Fitz Dingle would like to speak with him.

"Wait here till I come back," he said to George, and followed the messenger.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FITZ DINGLE AND THE COLORED MINSTRELS.

JACK was taken around the hall by the outer circle, then through a little corner door into a passage beside the stage. Glancing through openings in the wing, he could see the artists still at their antics; and he came near running against the tall Mr. Goffer, who had just come off.

"Beg pardon!" said Jack, who "felt queer" (as he afterwards told his friend) on finding himself in personal contact with a being who seemed to him a sort of embodied fiction, — a creature who did not belong to the actual world.

"No harm," replied Goffer, fanning his blackened face with his plantation hat. "Where 's Fitz Dingle?"

"This way," said a voice farther on; and Jack caught sight of the hooked nose and comical eye at the end of the passage. The other eye was twinkling with great satisfaction, — at Goffer, however, not at Jack.

"How was it, eh?" said Goffer, as Fitz Dingle took them into the company's dressing-room.

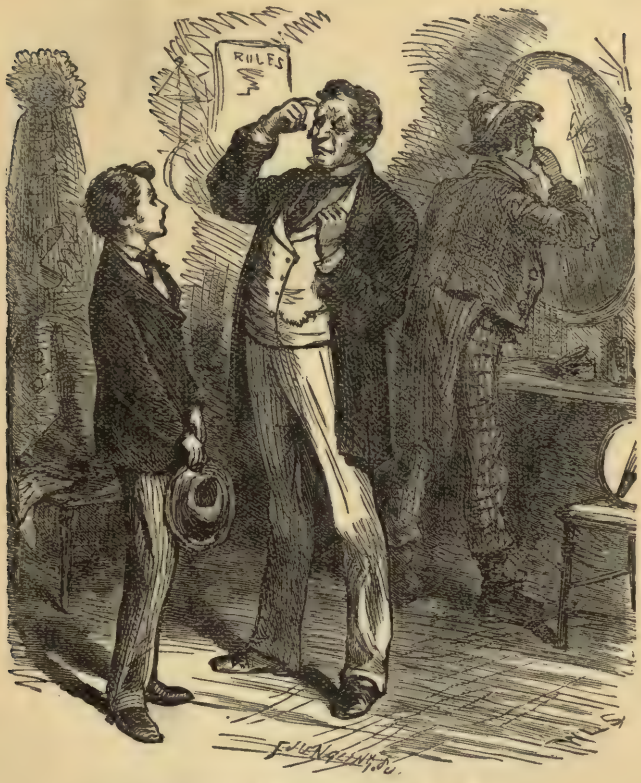
"Capital! a decided hit!" said the manager. "For a first appearance — good! very good! What do *you* say to it?" turning to Jack.

"I thought the whole performance very entertaining," Jack replied.

"Of course. I knew you would be delighted. My show, in its characteristic features, has n't its equal in the world; I say it boldly, — not in the civilized world. In its peculiar features, you understand. What part pleased you most?"

"O, Bones I think the funniest fellow! I never saw anything so ludicrous!"

"Bones is a finished artist — a great genius!" said Fitz Dingle. "He is an entertainment of himself. But there 's one difficulty — the public are used to him; and what a show like this needs is variety — novelty — surprise. Goffer is a surprise, — though, between me and you" (lowering his voice, and glancing at the tall artist, who had walked off to a looking-glass), "he ain't a great genius like Bones; he won't last like Bones; I shall be obliged to supplement him — follow him up with some new attraction. Sir!" said Fitz Dingle, expanding his soiled white waistcoat, and putting on a fierce, pompous look, "you 've no conception of the vast amount of thought it requires — the talent, the tact, I may say, the genius" (touching his forehead) — "to keep up an entertainment like this. The public sees the splendid result; but the public does *not* see — the public is blind" (he stuck his bad eye very tightly together, as if to represent the public vision) — "blind, sir, to the intellectual power, and the vast strain upon the intellectual power, behind the scenes."



"THE TALENT, THE TACT, I MAY SAY, THE GENIUS."

Jack, anxious to come to business, interrupted this harangue with, "You wrote me that your Triangle was sick."

"Yes; gave up this afternoon. A very useful man — not brilliant — good fair tenor — consumption, I'm afraid — and that put into my head an idea," Fitz

Dingle rattled on. And he proceeded to unfold the said idea, while Jack listened with reddening cheeks and downcast eyes. "What do you say, young man?"

"I'm afraid I never could!" said Jack. "I don't mean playing the triangle, I think I could do that," — for Fitz Dingle had produced the instrument, and shown how simple a thing it was for a person with a "good notion of time" to learn to play it, — "but the other part!" and Jack shook his head, laughing at the ridiculous suggestion.

"There 's no doubt about it whatever!" Fitz Dingle declared. "You can adapt yourself. I 'll see to everything. Only put yourself under my direction. Attend our rehearsals the rest of the week, and give your whole mind to the business; then I 'll make a special announcement of you for next Monday night, when your engagement and pay will begin."

"What is the pay to be?" Jack inquired, poising the triangle in his left hand, and touching it softly with the striker.

"Three dollars a week at first, with a chance of three or four times that amount in as many weeks, in case you prove a big success, as I've no doubt you will."

The temptation was too great to be resisted by an enterprising lad in Jack's straightened circumstances; and the bargain was closed.

"Now, if we could get a fresh hand, to make us up

a little dialogue, — something rich and sparkling, you know, — for your daybew — "

"My what?" queried Jack.

"Excuse me. I forget you're not a professional. 'Daybew' — first appearance." (French, *début.*) "You 'll soon catch the terms. I 've generally arranged the jokes and conversations, with a little assistance from Bones and Dandy Jim. But our stock is getting rather threadbare, and I 'd give a good price for something new and racy."

With the instinct of true friendship, Jack had constantly, in his thoughts, connected George with his own advancing fortunes; and now he eagerly caught at an opportunity of turning the new position of affairs to his friend's advantage.

"The young fellow you saw with me, — he is an author; writes for the magazines and newspapers, — prose, poetry, stories, songs, — I don't know what else; he could get you up something."

"Is he a joker?" inquired Fitz Dingle.

"Capital!" said Jack. "He is always making puns and conundrums." Which was, indeed, the truth, although it has not been developed in these pages, for the reason that what is funny enough in jocose conversation, is too apt to appear flat in print.

"Bring him with you to the rehearsals," said Fitz Dingle. "If he is up to the business, no doubt I can give him highly lucrative employment. In short," he added, with the usual swell and flourish and peel-

ing open of the comical eye, "put yourselves under my direction, and you are sure of large incomes; I may say fortunes, — fortunes, young man!"

The first part of the performance was now over, and during the intermission the room was thronged by the minstrels, lounging about, talking in their natural tones, and perhaps touching up their faces with burnt cork. The contrast of their easy and quiet behavior, with their artificial complexions and grotesque costumes, struck Jack almost as funnily as anything they did on the stage. Bones was especially an object of curiosity to him; and he was much surprised to find that incarnation of buffoonery the most serious and gentlemanly person of the troupe. Dandy Jim alone seemed inclined to carry the tricks and grimaces of his assumed character into private life.

Jack walked about on the stage while the curtain was down, and talked with Fitz Dingle and Goffer, and even enjoyed the high honor of exchanging a few words with that eminent person of genius, Mr. Bones. Seeing the proprietor applying his good eye to a little hole in the curtain, through which, himself unseen, he could survey the audience on the other side, Jack went and took his turn at the aperture. A misty sea of faces was before him; and it must be owned that a curious feeling came over the boy, at the thought of his appearing before such an audience on the following Monday night.

He saw George sitting alone, and looking rather melancholy, down in front; and wished he could

make himself seen by him through the eyelet. But just then Fitz Dingle touched him on the shoulder. Looking around, he perceived that the minstrels had already taken their places, in readiness for the second part of the performance. The bell tinkled, and Jack's heels had just time to disappear in the wing when the curtain rose.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PEN AND PURSE.

GREAT was the astonishment of George, when his friend returned to the seat beside him, and told him, in gleeful whispers, the result of his interview with Fitz Dingle.

"But I never can write negro talk!" he said, smothering his laughter.

"This is n't negro talk," replied Jack, "but only a kind of made-up lingo. You can catch it, and then make up some more, as well as anybody."

George did not say whether he thought he could or not. But he now regarded the minstrels with fresh interest; and on the way home, and for hours after he got to bed, his brain teemed with dialogues and songs, with which (as he fondly hoped) future audiences in Bowery Hall were to be kept in a roar.

At ten o'clock the next day, he went with Jack to the rehearsal, and showed Fitz Dingle a few things which he had jotted down.

The professional eye sparkled with satisfaction.

"Excellent! Capital! You 've got the idea, exactly. It only needs working up. You 've dramatic talent, too, — why, here 's a very good dramatic situation! I believe, after a little study and experience,

you can write us a play, a regular low-comedy piece, — hits at the times, — interspersed with songs and dances — appropriate parts for all our artists!" And Fitz Dingle puffed and glared and winked his good eye, and closed and peeled open the funny one, in the enthusiasm kindled by these fertile suggestions of his genius.

George was greatly encouraged; and he began at once to think of writing something which should not only suit Fitz Dingle, and divert the public, but also serve to elevate the character of the performances at Bowery Hall.

"I believe," thought he, "that an entertainment need not be too broadly burlesque, in order to be amusing; and who knows —" His mind wandering off in a splendid, but rather vague, vision of future success and usefulness.

The rehearsal was nothing like what the boys thought it would be. The minstrels did not take the trouble to black their faces, or change their clothes, or even their manners, for the occasion, but appeared much like commonplace mortals, met together to talk over a dull matter of business. Nobody would have believed that the serious man with the clappers in his hands, who languidly went through his part, like one but half awake, was the inimitable mimic, the inspired Bones, of the night before.

"Now, my lad," cried Fitz Dingle, approaching Jack, after the new things for the evening's performance had been arranged, "I want you to show the gentlemen what you can do."

Jack modestly took a position near the centre of the stage, and waited for Mr. Jenkins (the Dandy Jim of the previous night) to get ready his banjo and play an appropriate air. George stood near by, anxiously watching him, while Fitz Dingle and his artists were grouped around. The dance began rather quietly, and George feared his friend might have caught too much of the careless spirit of the rehearsal. But gradually Jack warmed up to his work; his face became animated, his attitudes agile and jaunty, and every movement alive with a lithe grace and gayety; so, with hand on hip, or flung airily above his head, he went through with his marvellous double-shuffle, and, at the close, bowed laughingly at an imaginary audience in the hall.

Fitz Dingle clapped enthusiastically; others nodded approvingly; and the serious Mr. Bones was heard to remark, at George's elbow, that a young fellow who could do that could do anything. Only Goffer, it was observed, made no sign, but walked off, looking melancholy.

After that, Jack touched the triangle to the music of the banjo, and found that he could easily master that instrument of sweetly tinkling sounds. Then he and his friend went home, highly elated with the result of the forenoon's business.

In the afternoon, George called at the office of "Upton's Literary Magazine," and met with a cordial reception from the dashy young editor.

"Pretty good story," said Mr. Upton, taking the

manuscript from a pigeon-hole over his desk. "Will make about five and a half pages. I shall try to get it into our next number. Not in the June, — that is already in type; but the July."

So at last George had got one article really accepted by a paying magazine! It was a great event in his history; at least, it seemed so to him then. The editor's manner had prepared him for the welcome news, and he was not visibly excited by it; only a glistening of the eye and a tremor of the lips betraying the inward relief and satisfaction which he felt.

"Do you think I can write something else for you?" he quietly asked.

"Yes; good short stories. And it has occurred to me that you can write us a novelette, to run through, say, half a dozen numbers. I see you 've got what few young writers have, — an idea of character. Your 'Old Backwoodsman' is first-rate. Perhaps a trifle too Leatherstockingish (you 've read Cooper, I see), but not enough to do any hurt. You 've dramatic talent too; did you know it?"

"So I 've been told," George replied, with a smile, remembering the words of Fitz Dingle.

"Suppose you try your hand at a novelette, and let me see the first chapters; I can tell whether you hit the nail on the head. Good, lively stories, full of humor and human nature, — plenty of incident, good plot, and all that, — are rare in the market; and I believe you 're up to just that sort of thing. What do you say?"

George said, that, with such encouragement, he should like extremely well to try his hand at the work proposed. And he left the editorial presence with a heart so light that he seemed to be treading on air.

He scarcely knew which way he walked, but turned his steps instinctively towards his favorite place of resort, — the Battery, — where the sight of the green grass, and the trees, and the dashing water, and the bay enlivened with ferry-boats and sails, might well bring refreshment to the heart of a country boy in town.

There, under the powerful stimulus of knowing that his talents were recognized, and that something was wanted of him, George thought of the subject, and of some of the characters and scenes, of a novelette for Mr. Upton, which he determined to begin without delay. It was to be a story of pioneer life, embodying some of the early settlers' adventures with the Indians, which he remembered to have heard related in his childhood.

The shilling which had been earned by carrying a trunk, was now boldly invested in foolscap, and the front attic of Mrs. Libby's house assumed a decidedly literary aspect. George commenced "Jacob Price, the Pioneer," and divided his time between that and the work he had undertaken for Bowery Hall. It must be owned that the romance was much more to his taste than the dialogues, and that his interest in these was kept up only because they promised a present gain,

while he could not expect pay for his magazine articles until they were published.

As Saturday night was drawing near, when the boys would have to pay another week's board in advance, if they stayed at Mrs. Libby's, George did not neglect the newspaper offices, where he had hoped to raise a little money on his poems and sketches. He met with no success. He found editors willing enough to print his articles, but not to pay for them. And even Fitz Dingle, who had a sharp eye for his own interests, turned only the dull one (provokingly stuck together) to the boys' necessities, which they respectfully laid before him.

"It 's against my rule," he said, "to pay anybody a cent in advance. If I should break that rule, my whole troupe would come down on me. Every one would want assistance. My business would be ruined. Artists (between ourselves) are the most improvident set of men in the world."

It was not so clear to the boys that a loan of four dollars, to relieve their immediate distress, would involve Bowery Hall in ultimate disaster. But men who have at heart no principle of action will often insist most strenuously upon one which they find it convenient to assume. And so Fitz Dingle, who might have told the boys truly that he could not always pay what he actually owed chose to put them off with a pretence.

CHAPTER XXV.

PROFESSOR DE WALDO AND MASTER FELIX.

On Saturday, as George was retiring from a newspaper office with a rejected manuscript, a stranger, with a smiling countenance, and in seedy apparel, — his coat buttoned to his chin, — followed him out.

"You are a writer, I believe," said the man, accosting him at the foot of the stairs.

"In a humble way," George admitted.

"On the contrary," said the man, with a flattering smile, on a lean and not very prepossessing visage, "I think you are a very good writer." And he bowed deferentially, placing his hand on his chest, across which his coat was tightly buttoned.

George, who was in no mood to be trifled with, and did not quite like the stranger's manners, asked what means he had of forming such an opinion.

"From your talk with the editor, up stairs. He made a great mistake in rejecting your piece. I think it was because you wanted pay for it."

"I think so too," said George.

"Allow me to glance at it. Excuse the liberty," said the man, with a skinny smile, "but I am — ha — a little in the literary line myself."

"An author?"

The man pleasantly shook his head. "Guess agin."

"An editor?" said George, reluctantly giving the manuscript.

"Neither," replied the man, politely receiving it. "Ah! I see you are indeed a ready writer. Would that I had the wings of a dove, and that mine enemy had written a book!" he added, softly and sweetly, though somewhat irrelevantly, as it seemed to George. "I am Professor De Waldo."

"Indeed?" said George, because he did not know what else to say.

"Professor of Biological Science and Mesmerism. You write for money. I am in the way of getting things wrote, which I pay money for. I think we can trade. Thank you." And Professor De Waldo returned the manuscript with a bow, adding, "Remarkably fine, I am sure!"

George now became interested, and wished to know what he could do for the Professor of Biological Science and Mesmerism.

"I have to lay my discoveries before the public. In a condensed and cheerful way, — no long-winded treatise, you understand, — in short, a hand-bill."

"I know nothing about Biological Science or Mesmerism," George objected.

"Not necessary. Come to my room. I 'll give you the ideas, and you shall put 'em in words. Something in this style." And Professor De Waldo showed him a soiled slip of printed paper, — evidently the advertisement of some quack doctor, — which he wished to have imitated.

George saw that it would not require much professional knowledge or literary skill to write such a document; and with a smile he said he thought he could do it.

"How much will it be worth to you, — a paper about the length of this?" he inquired.

"Fix your own price; money is a small consideration with me," answered the professor, loftily.

But George, who was to undertake the job solely for the money it would bring him in (just as he would have undertaken to carry trunks or dig potatoes), required a rather more definite statement of terms.

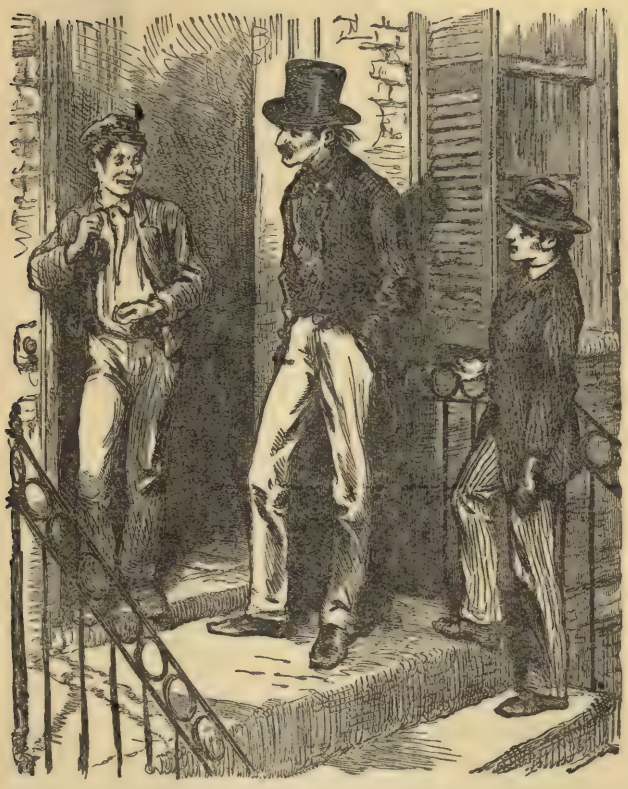
"O, five or ten dollars, — not less than five; but we'll arrange that without any trouble. The laborer is worthy of his hire," said the liberal professor, "and I am one that had always druther pay too much than too little, especially to literary men. Come with me."

He took George to a somewhat shabby-looking house on Murray Street, in the doorway of which stood a shabby-looking lad, amusing himself by blowing peas through a tube, at some doves in the gutter.

"Any callers?" asked the professor of this youthful marksman.

"Nobody but the furniture man," the boy replied, with a grin. He blew a pea, and added, "He brought his bill again, for the sofa-bed."

"Never mind about that," said the professor, shortly. Then, turning to George, "This is my mesmeric subject, — Master Felix, — a very remarkable clairvoyant. Walk up stairs."



"ANY CALLERS?" ASKED THE PROFESSOR.

Preceded by the professor, and followed by the mesmeric subject, George went up one flight, to a gloomy back room, lighted by a single window that looked out on a narrow court between high brick walls.

"Take a seat here at the table. I'll give ye the

pints while you write 'em down. To begin with — Master Felix, tell the gentleman how you happen to be with me."

"The professor was lecturing in our town," began the boy, preparing to blow a pea out of the window.

"Put up your pastime, and 'tend to business," said the professor. "I was lecterin' in your town, was I? And what town was that? Be explicit. Facts is facts."

"Chester, Pennsylvania," said the boy, stooping to pick up a pea he had dropped.

"On the Delaware River; a very old and very respectable town," added the professor. "Any person," — he made a sweeping gesture with his hands, and stood as if addressing an audience, — "any person or persons doubtin' the facts of this very wonderful case, can easily satisfy themselves by takin' the slight trouble of runnin' down to Chester, and makin' careful inquiries — too much care cannot be took in such matters — of any number of people, includin' three clergymen and five physicians, whose names I shall be most happy to furnish. I was lecterin' in the place, to a remarkably large and intelligent aujence, when this young gentleman — But tell your own story." Seeing the tube still in the boy's hands, he muttered in a gruff undertone, "Put up that pop-gun, or I'll smash it." Then added, blandly, aloud, "Tell your own story, Master Felix."

"I was in the back part of the hall, when you was lecturing, and I felt your magnetic power, and

marched down the aisle, and up to the platform, — at least, so they tell me; for I never knew how I got there."

"No; and you did n't know how you read with your eyes bandaged, and told what was in the pockets of the gentlemen in the front seats, — one thing being a lock of a young lady's hair in a letter, which the young man was very much ashamed, and the aujence amused. You did n't know it; and why?"

"I suppose, 'cause I was under the influence."

"Because he was under the influence," repeated the professor, still addressing George as if he were a large public assembly. "And why, Master Felix, have you been here with me ever since?"

"'Cause I could n't help it; felt drawn to ye. If the professor is miles away," said Master Felix, in his turn addressing the audience, "I feel him, and can't be easy, partic'larly if he wills me to come to him; then I have to go."

"No matter how dark the night, or how thick the bandages on his eyes, if I will him to come to me, — wherever I be, — he comes. Is that so, Master Felix? A most marvellous clairvoyant!" the professor went on; "can pint out lost or stolen articles, and prescribe for all kinds of diseases with most astonishin' success. The medicines I have prepared under his direction is the most extraordinary now in use."

George glanced from the professor to the mesmeric subject, and said he thought it quite likely.

"I 've lectered and given public exhibitions with

this boy in a great many places," continued De Waldo; "and now we open here next week, with private settins in this room, to which the public is respec'fully invited. What I want is somethin' takin', for a hand-bill, — somethin' to excite curiosity, and bring in the crowd. And now for the main pints, which you can fill up from your fancy."

George took down the "pints," and said he thought he could have the paper ready that evening.

"Very well," replied the professor; "then this evenin' you shall have the cash for it; five dollars if it 's good, and ten dollars if it 's very good. Now, put in the big licks, — make it flamin', ye know, and, above all, good-natered; for, whatever else ye may call me, I 'm the best-natered man in the world. — Master Felix, show the gentleman down stairs."

CHAPTER XXVI.

MRS. LIBBY IS "MUCH OBLEEGED."

GEORGE reached home at dinner-time; when, meeting Jack, he told him briefly of his encounter with De Waldo, and of the job he had undertaken.

"Don't put it into my biography, if you live to write it!" said he, laughing and blushing. "I was never more ashamed of anything; and my conscience troubles me a little. I'm sure the professor is a humbug, and am I not aiding and abetting him?"

"But it's a big price, and I don't know what we should do without the money. I say, secure that, humbug or no humbug!" replied Jack, gayly. And so our boys did as men are too prone to do, letting the loud voice of necessity overwhelm the delicate sense of right and wrong.

George would have been disgusted with his task, but for the fun he got out of it. He drew on his wit for his inspiration, and laughed well over the ludicrous extravagance of phrase in which he indulged, and which he believed would suit the professor. At five o'clock his hand-bill was written, and neatly copied; and, in high spirits, he set out to get his pay for it.

He found Master Felix standing in the door of

the shabby-genteel house, looking melancholy, there being no doves to shoot peas at, — or it may be the professor had confiscated his gun, and destroyed his ammunition.

"He has got a caller," said the boy. "He can't see any one just yet."

"Tell him I have brought the document," replied George.

Master Felix went up to the room, and presently returned with a polite message. Professor De Waldo was engaged, but he would like to have the young gentleman leave the paper for him to examine, and call again in half an hour; which George consented to do.

He walked the street till the half-hour had expired, and then returned to Master Felix, who informed him that the professor had gone out.

George was somewhat disturbed by this announcement; but Master Felix said coolly, —

"He did n't have time to read your paper, but he said if you came again before he got back, he would send the money around to you this evening."

"I want the money before I leave," said George, firmly. "I 'll go up to his room and wait."

"You can't get in," replied Master Felix, with a grin. "He has locked the door and taken away the key."

"Then I 'll wait here."

"You can, if you like; but I 'm going to get my supper." And Master Felix sauntered away.

George waited, growing more and more anxious as the time passed, and the professor did not appear. At length, tired and hungry, he determined to go home to his supper, and return for his money afterwards.

"I 'll lay siege to that door," he said to Jack, "and I won't leave it without taking one of three things, — the money, or the manuscript, or the professor's life!"

Though this was said laughingly, he was quite in earnest with regard to the first two articles named; and he kept his word.

Arrived at the house in Murray Street, he found the door closed, and the night-latch down. But our young poet from the rural districts had by this time learned the use of a door-bell; and he put that knowledge and the muscles of his right arm into so vigorous use on this occasion, that he soon brought Master Felix to the door.

The mesmeric subject was looking pale and wild, as if expecting some one whom he had come unwillingly to admit; and the sight of George, flushed and resolute, did not seem to soothe his troubled mind.

Almost before the visitor had time to ask for the professor, Master Felix pushed out a folded sheet of foolscap through the half-opened door.

"He told me to tell you he don't want it."

"Don't want the hand-bill I have written for him!" cried George, astonished.

"He don't like it," said Master Felix, still holding

out the manuscript; "and he says he did n't expect to pay for it unless it suited him."

"Where is he?" demanded George, pushing into the entry, as he seized the manuscript.

"I don't know," said the frightened Master Felix. "He came home, and went off again."

George mounted the dimly lighted stairs, tried the professor's door, and found it locked. Then, as there seemed to be nothing else he could do, he put the manuscript into his pocket, and went home. I am sorry to record of him that he ever in his life felt as if he would like to wreak mortal vengeance on a man; but I fear that — of the three things aforesaid, having missed the first — he would have much preferred the professor's life to the manuscript.

As he went up to his room, wondering what he should say to Jack, and what they would both say to Mrs. Libby, he heard voices in the attic; and there were the two persons he was thinking of, having a private talk together in his absence.

"Here he is now!" said Jack, starting eagerly to meet him.

"I am very glad he has come," said the feeble tones of Mrs. Libby; "for I don't want nothing but what is right, and I hope it 's as you say about the money, though the gentleman is waiting down stairs now to know whether he can have the room or not."

"Have n't got it?" exclaimed Jack, with dismay, at the sight of his friend's face, which told the dismal story before his tongue could speak.

"It 's a perfect swindle. He don't want the hand-bill, and he won't pay for it."

"Then it 's all up with us!"

"How so?" said George, casting anxious looks at the landlady.

"If we can't pay, we must give place to somebody who can," replied Jack.

"I 've had three applications for the room this afternoon," said Mrs. Libby; "and one of 'em is in the parlor now, waiting, with his three dollars in his pocket, — for it 's three dollars to one person, four for two, and very cheap at that, — and I have my rent and butchers' and bakers' bills to pay, and how can I give lodgings and breakfases and dinners, without my boarders pays up?"

"We 'll pay you, of course," said George. "We are sure of some money next week. Besides, here are our trunks."

"Your room-mate has told me all that, and I don't doubt your good intentions, and I must say, two more quiet and well-behaved young persons I never had in my house, and it 's nothing I have agin you, but boarders, somehow, never does have the money they promise, if they don't have it when it 's due, and I 've been made to suffer so many times when I 've let a bill run, and trunks is no great satisfaction, I 've found that out, to my sorrow, and I 'm worrited to death as it is, to make both ends meet; and a husband that don't do what a husband should, though I do say it; and I assure you, young men, it goes to

my heart to have to ask you to vacate, for if I had the money I would never turn the poorest wretch in the world out of doors!"

And tears of distress actually ran down the good woman's cheeks.

"She is right," said Jack. "Come on, George! Pack your trunk. I 'll have my things ready to move out in five minutes."

"But where shall we go?"

"No matter now. We shall have time enough to think about that by and by."

And Jack proceeded with cheerful alacrity to pack up, while George stood by, quite bewildered.

"I 'm sure I shall be ever so much obleeged to you," said the landlady, wiping her eyes. "And if you do git your money, and want to come back, and there is a vacant room in the house, there 's nobody I 'd sooner see enter my doors and set at my table, and you know it ain't my will, but my necessity."

And she went to close the bargain with the three dollars waiting in her parlor.

George now having by degrees come to his senses, he began — though in a dazed and stupid way — to pack his trunk.

"Going to leave?" said a pleasant voice at the door.

"We are," replied Jack, coldly; for it was Mr. Manton who spoke.

"Too bad!" said that gentleman, politely. "Anything I can do for you?"

"Yes! lend us four dollars!" cried George. "Or, at least, pay us the half-dollar you borrowed of us the other night. We're turned into the street, and have n't a cent to pay for a night's lodging."

"Sorry I can't oblige you. I shall have some money next week, but I'm hard up just now. I'll see Mrs. Libby, though, and get her to trust you on my account."

"Don't trouble yourself; you are too kind,— you've been too kind to us from the first!" said Jack, with bitter sarcasm, raising his voice, as Mr. Manton retired.

The trunk and valise were soon packed, and taken down the stairs, up which they had been so hopefully carried the Saturday night before; then lugged out into the street, and set down upon the sidewalk.

"Well! now what?" said Jack, wiping his forehead.

"I don't know!" replied George, with a long breath. "It has all happened so quickly that it has quite taken my wits away. I must stop and think."

And the two houseless and penniless lads sat down on the trunk to rest, and talk over the situation.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A VISIT TO THE PAWNBROKER.

"We might have pawned some of my things, and got money to pay another week in advance," said George. "Why did n't you speak of it?"

Jack had not spoken of it, because they were George's things, and not his own. But he said: —

"We can do better than that. I 've had my eye on two or three rooms to let, and I inquired the rent of one, only this afternoon, not knowing what might happen. It 's only a dollar and a half a week; and nothing was said about pay in advance."

"Just for the room?" said George. "But we must have something to eat!"

"Yes; but don't you see? If we have a place to sleep, then we can regulate our diet according to our means. If we have only sixpence a day, we can buy a loaf of bread, and live on that. At all events, we sha' n't have to pay our board in advance; and that 's the great difficulty just now."

"You 're right, Jack, — as you always are. Where 's the room you inquired about?"

"Just around here, in Reade Street, over the wine-store. Stay with the things, and I 'll go and see if I can engage it, — if you say so."

"Of course I say so!" cried George, greatly relieved and encouraged. And he added, gratefully, "Jack! what should I do without you?"

"If it had n't been for me, you would n't have had your pocket picked, in the first place," said Jack, who could never forget that he was the first to spring to the support of the man who had robbed them.

"But that was nothing you were to blame for," George replied, as he always did to remarks of this nature; for, since their quarrel, these fast friends, in discussing their good or evil fortune, generously vied with each other in disclaiming the credit for it, or in assuming the blame.

Jack was gone about fifteen minutes, and returned, out of breath with haste, but with a gay countenance.

"The room was a dollar and a half for one, two dollars for two, but I beat 'em down to a dollar and seventy-five cents; and we can move right in!"

"Anything said about pay in advance?"

"Not a word! And I don't believe there will be, when we take possession. Catch hold here!"

"What a fellow you are!" laughed George, admiringly. "O, but you must let me carry the valise, with my end of the trunk!"

"Wait till my arms get tired, then you shall have a chance," replied Jack. And away they went to their new lodgings in Reade Street.

It was even a better room than that which they had just vacated, and it contained two chairs instead of one.

"This is what I call a good thing!" exclaimed George, looking about him, after they had fairly taken possession. "This stand will do for my writing-table; and here 's a good place for it in the niche between the chimney and the window. Farewell, Mrs. Libby! Fare thee well, and if forever, still forever fare thee well; though you 're very good and clever, we must leave you for a spell!" he cried gayly, parodying his favorite, Byron. "What are you thinking of, Jack?"

"What an amusing fellow you are!" Jack replied, sitting astride a chair, leaning his arms on the back.

"You don't look much amused at my nonsense. I believe you 're thinking about to-morrow; Sunday, you know."

Jack nodded; and, opening his mouth, tossed his finger at the cavity, with a droll look and gesture.

"Something to eat?" said George. "I wish now I had saved Fitz Dingle's shilling, which I paid out for writing-paper; we might have worried through the day on that. But here are my books; I can spare these better than anything else; and we 'll pawn one or two, for enough to live on till our ships come in." And he opened his trunk.

"Try one first," said Jack. "Which shall it be?"

The most valuable books for their purpose were the poetical works of Byron, Scott, and Burns, each complete in a large volume; and both boys thought it should be one of these.

"Byron is the fellow!" said George; but, after a

moment's reflection, "I don't know, though! I don't see how I can spare him, he 's so good to take up now and then." And he began to read or recite favorite passages, as he turned the leaves. "No, I 'll keep Byron, and let Burns pay a visit to the pawnbroker. But how good this is!" He had chanced upon "Tam O'Shanter," of which he read a few lines with great spirit, which, to Jack's mind, more than made up for his bad pronunciation of the Scotch.

So he laid Burns aside with Byron, and declared that Scott should be the martyr. But then, Scott! so robust, so picturesque! how could he sacrifice him? The third precious volume was therefore placed with the other two; and now the matter of choice was to be entirely reconsidered.

"Pshaw!" said George, impatiently. "You choose for me. Here, I 'll place the books in a row on the table, and blind your eyes, and lead you up to them, and let you touch one; and that shall decide it."

So Jack, with a handkerchief over his eyes, stood before the row of books, and stretched forth his hand, while George held his breath with suspense. The lot fell upon Byron; and in five minutes the noble poet was on his way to the nearest pawnbroker's shop, in company with our two boys.

They entered under the sign of the three gilt balls, and found themselves in a narrow shop, with a bare wall on one side, and a counter on the other, over which was stretched a coarse wire screen. The wall

on that side was lined to the top with shelves, divided off into large-sized pigeon-holes, which (as the boys could see through the wire screen) were stuffed full of all sorts of curious articles and odd-shaped bundles. At the end of the screen was a sort of sentry-box, with a hole in the back part, over the counter, where modest customers, one at a time, could transact their delicate business with the proprietor unobserved.

There was a woman in the box at the time; and as the boys awaited their turn, they could hear her low tones of entreaty, interrupted by sobs.

"This must be a dreadful business!" murmured George; "to live upon other people's distress! I 'd rather be a beast of prey, outright; for then I should n't be troubled with any conscience in the matter."

"These men are not troubled with much," Jack replied. "Hear how calm and business-like his tones are!"

"Jack," said George, with a shudder, "do you think we shall have to pay many visits to the sign of the three golden balls?"

"It is n't likely; though when people begin to come here," said Jack, "I suppose it 's a good deal like rolling down hill, — the farther you go, the faster, and the harder to stop. But come! it 's our turn now."

The woman, draped all in black, passed them quickly and silently as a ghost, except that a low sob, stifled by her close veil, was heard as she went out.



THE PAWNBROKER'S SHOP.

"A poor widow, pawning something dear to her, perhaps her dead husband's watch, or her wedding-ring," whispered George, his own voice choking with emotion, as they took her place in the box.

A shrivelled little old man, with a large nose, and large black eyes, which looked strangely black and bright under his white hair and white eyebrows, received the book, glanced at it sharply as he turned the leaves, and, laying it back on the counter with a discontented air, said briefly, "Two shillings."

"Two shillings!" echoed George, crowding into the box behind his friend. "Why, it cost two dollars!"

"Two shillings is all I can adwance on dat," said the man, with a strong foreign accent, and in the same low, firm, business-like tones which had answered the woman's entreaties. "It will pring no more as dat, if sold at auction."

"Sold at auction!" again echoed George. "We shall redeem it in a few days."

"I do not know dat. I take no reesk. Two shillings," was the cold, dry response.

Jack thereupon soothed his indignant friend by saying that they could live on that sum for a day or two; and that the less money they borrowed, the less interest they would have to pay when they should come to redeem the article pledged. After some further consultation, the book was left in exchange for a silver quarter of a dollar (two York shillings), and a pawnbrowker's ticket, duly numbered; and the

boys gave place to a shabby old man, who entered the box with a rolled-up bedquilt in his arms.

On their way home they stopped at a grocery, and invested eighteen cents of their money in a small loaf of bread, a pound of crackers, and a piece of cheese. When they finally reached their room, they were in the best of spirits. The very novelty of this way of life had an attraction for them; and they felt now as if they could meet, with heroic cheerfulness, any sort of hardship or privation, as long as they remained together.

The next day they breakfasted, dined, and supped off their humble fare, and found it sweet. They were a little averse, however, to letting their neighbors in the house know how they were obliged to economize their means; and so, at the regular hours for meals, they went out and took long walks, returning after a lapse of time which might have allowed of a very sumptuous repast at a public table or the house of a friend. Both boys naturally despised pretence, and they made a good deal of fun of this weakness in themselves; George proposing, with humorous gravity, that they should add a finishing stroke to the innocent little humbug, by picking their teeth, after dinner, on the steps of the Astor House.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE END OF AN AIR-CASTLE.

THE next day was Monday; and in the evening Jack was to make his first appearance before a New York audience, at Bowery Hall. He was to have but little to say or sing; but he was expected to make a lively sensation by coming out as *Miss Dinah*, a colored young lady, and dancing, first alone, and afterwards with Goffer; "a tip-top idea, sure to take with an appreciative public," in the words of the sagacious Fitz Dingle.

The novelty of the new enterprise, and the prospect of earning some money, inspired Jack; and he set off, full of hope, accompanied by his friend, to attend the forenoon rehearsal.

George had that morning finished a little dialogue, in which Jack, as a young lady, and Goffer, as a beau (both colored, of course), were to have the principal parts, and perform some choice dances; he was now to submit his work to the judgment of Fitz Dingle, and, as he fondly hoped, receive a small advance of money for it.

The friends reached Bowery Hall at the usual hour, and were surprised to find the door closed, and several of their "artist" friends waiting for it to

open. Some of them appeared much excited; and when Jack asked what was the matter, Bones, with a grimly significant look, pointed at the play-bill posted beside the main entrance. It was the old bill, advertising the last week's performance, instead of a new bill, in which Jack's appearance as *Miss Dinah* should have been announced.

Jack turned pale; for, although he had already, impelled by a natural curiosity, looked for this interesting announcement, and noticed that the Bowery Hall posters had not been changed, the circumstance did not, until this moment, strike him as anything ominous of evil. But now, interpreted by the dismal irony of Bones's smile, it became alarming.

"Where 's Fitz Dingle?"

"That 's the question!" said Bones, curtly; and he commenced walking to and fro in the street, with his head down, and those wonderful hands of his thrust deep into his pockets.

"Is he sick?" George asked, appealing to Dandy Jim.

"Who? Lucius Fitz Dingle? Not very!"

"Then what is the matter?"

"Broke, I reckon," said Dandy Jim, with a reckless laugh. "Fitz Dingle is a man of genius, of vast resources, — at least, in his own opinion; and he has certainly had some of the best artists in his troupe, in the whole country; no lack of patronage on the part of the public, either; but here you see the result. Bad management."

"Worse than that," said the dignified Mr. Jones, coming up. "Gambling! Fitz Dingle has made two or three small fortunes in the show business, and lost 'em at roulette and faro. Our pay for the past week is due every Monday morning, when we come to rehearsal; he owes every man in the troupe a week's wages, and all his other bills are in arrears. So I think he has cut stick. Goffer and one or two others have gone to find him; but they won't succeed."

An aguish feeling of despair came over George, as he listened to this explanation; and he cast anxious glances at Jack, who was looking pale but calm.

"It throws every man of us out of employment, if he don't appear and pay up," muttered Bones, as he strode past. "There comes Goffer!"

It was indeed the long-limbed dancer, who appeared without Fitz Dingle, and with an open letter in his hand. He also brought a key in his pocket, with which he let the crowd into the hall. Then he showed the letter.

It was from the great Lucius, to the members of his troupe. In it he announced the painful necessity of his temporary withdrawal from public notice, and concluded in this eloquent strain, which Goffer read aloud with groans, and which was heard with gnashings of teeth: —

"Yet think not that I Go without hope; for wherever fate may lead me, whether on the Bounding Billow or the Desert Sands, or in the flowery pastures of a New Prosperity, I shall be actuated by a noble ambition to

meet you again, at No Distant Date, when all arrears will be Settled, and a new Troupe Organized, on a scale of Unparalleled elegance and magnificence, which shall eclipse the Glory of all Former Efforts, and restore the Fame and Fortunes of — Yours till Death,

"L. Fitz Dingle."

"I can fancy how his bad eye shut and peeled open when he wrote that!" said Dandy Jim, while his companions indulged in remarks far more damaging to the late proprietor's eyes and reputation.

Each seemed to think only of his own private loss and disappointment; and it must be confessed that George and Jack took about as selfish views of the matter as any of the rest. It did not seem to them that the Bowery Hall bankruptcy could prove half so crushing to anybody else's hopes and fortunes as to their own; yet to their credit it must be said that each thought first of the other's disappointment, and that it was in trying to cheer each other that they cheered themselves.

"Never mind for me!" cried Jack, bravely, as they walked away from the hall. "This shows me that I am not to get a living with my heels, as a colored minstrel. If I had fairly begun, and succeeded, I might, perhaps, have never been able to quit the business; and, from what I know of it, I say deliver me from following such a profession! Though I *should* have liked to dance *Miss Dinah* this evening, just to see how it would seem."

"You are made for something better, — I knew it

all the while," said George. "And something better will come now, — it *must* come, you know!"

"And you can do better than writing those nonsensical dialogues, George! They're not worthy of your genius. Go in now for the magazines and first-class papers; that's what I see for you. Meanwhile, I'll look for something else. We've already found how little we can live on, and be jolly."

"Byron's about gone," said George, ruefully, taking two cents from his pocket. "There's all that's left of him. We shall have to eat Scott for dinner; and I feel as if I should like a pretty good meal."

"Come on!" cried Jack, "let's be extravagant for once."

George consented. Their extravagance consisted in devouring the poetical works of the great Sir Walter at a single meal; taking them in the shape of two smoking dishes of veal-pie, at a popular eating-house. Their appetites were excellent, and they grew quite hilarious over the repast, laughing defiance at fortune. George even showed a tendency to break forth in singing as they left the table, but he checked himself, laying his hand on his stomach, and saying that it was the "Lay of the Last Minstrel" which inspired him.

To atone for this extravagance, the boys ate no supper that night.

The next day they began upon Burns; but they made him go further, by selling him outright at a second-hand book-stall, for half a dollar.

They lived upon Burns a little over two days. Then some old school-books of George's, a very ancient edition of Virgil, with a literal translation, the "Vicar of Wakefield," and one or two of Cooper's novels, found their way to the book-stalls, and helped our heroes to a scanty subsistence.

To pay their rent they were obliged to begin upon their clothes.

As they had had none washed since leaving home, their under garments were hardly in a fit condition to appear before the sharp-eyed old pawnbroker; and Jack insisted on sacrificing first an extra coat which he had brought with him. A pair of trousers belonging to George soon followed that; then went Jack's knife, George's razor (he was beginning to shave), and, alas! his flute. This had cost three dollars and a half, and it produced, at the pawnbroker's, a loan of seventy cents.

Meanwhile, Jack divided his time between seeking employment, doing such little jobs as came in his way, for any paltry sums he could get, and running to the pawnbroker's and baker's. For the original business which had brought him to town he had less and less time and heart. All the fun to be got out of this course of life had soon worn off, and, though the lads kept their spirits up as well as they could, anxiety and privation were beginning to have their effect upon both body and mind.

George all this time stayed at home, while Jack did their errands; toiling at his little writing-table

in the niche, finishing "Jacob Price, the Pioneer," for Mr. Upton (who liked the first chapters); and, at Jack's suggestion, writing such short articles as he hoped to sell for cash to one or two weekly papers.

"Why don't you try the dailies?" said Jack, one evening, after bringing home to him two rejected manuscripts.

"O, I can't write for the dailies!" said George, despondently; and if they had not been sitting in the dark, to save the expense of candles, Jack might have seen how very worn and haggard his friend's face looked.

"Yes, you can. I 'll give you a subject. Take that ship-load of Dutch emigrants we saw landing the first Sunday we were in town. Describe the strange appearance of the passengers, their wooden shoes, the women in their short petticoats, and the men in their bags of trousers. Then draw on your fancy a little, — the homes and friends they have left behind, the long sea-voyage, the new land they 've come to, the home they 'll find in the West: though they look strange to us, we look quite as strange to them; this is a great country; — and all that sort of thing. You know how to do it!" cried Jack, encouragingly.

George's mind kindled at these suggestions, and he would have sat up till midnight writing the article, if they had not been out of candles. As it was, he lay awake long after they went to bed, thinking what he would write, and rose at daybreak the next morn-

ing to begin "A Scene at the Wharves," Jack having agreed to take the sketch, as soon as completed, to an editor with whom he had become slightly acquainted, in examining the files of one of the old daily newspapers.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE PROFESSOR'S HAND-BILL.

MEANWHILE George had got two more short sketches accepted by "Upton's Magazine," and obtained a small advance of money on them. But, frugally as they were living, this was soon gone; and, while waiting to hear from "A Scene at the Wharves" (which it took the editor several days to examine), the boys were reduced to what they would have believed the last extremity, if they had not, in their ignorance, thought they had reached that point two or three times before. Now there seemed to be no end to what they might have to endure.

It was one Saturday afternoon, when, in the early twilight, the boys sat in their room and talked.

"I 've at last written to Vinnie for her money," said George. "There 's the letter; I have n't sent it yet. I 've put off asking her for it as long as I could; but it 's no use. I 'm getting sick."

"George," said Jack, in a low, anxious voice, "you have n't seemed well lately."

"I 'm worn out — mind and body," George confessed. "I thought I could finish 'Jacob Price' to-day; but the thing spins out fearfully; and, really, I had n't the strength to write. I 'll rest to-morrow,

and on Monday take a fresh start. Mr. Upton ought to advance me twenty dollars on 'Jacob.' I wish there was any way to avoid sending that letter to Vinnie! Think of my taking money of her!" And George, in his weak state, actually shed tears.

"You need n't send it," replied Jack, cheerily. "I'll write to Mr. Chatford; he will send me something, I know, — enough for our present needs, and to pay my passage home."

George knew something of the humiliation it would be to the proud and headstrong Jack to write such a letter; but his own trouble now made him almost forget his friend's.

"Jack, I can't bear to have you leave me! Hard as this trial has been, I have felt almost thankful for it, because it has brought us so near together, and your friendship has been so precious to me. Why, when you are away, you don't know how I anticipate your coming home, or how much happiness just your sitting down in the room brings to me in my worst troubles!"

Jack tried to speak, in answer to this touching confession, but something very much like a sob checked his voice, and, for a moment, he winked hard, and silently passed his sleeve across his eyes.

"George," said he, after a while, in tones thick with the feeling he was trying to control, "I won't leave you till I see you fairly on your legs, — I promise you that. We'll make a raid on 'Jacob Price' next week; and I shall hear from 'A Scene on the

Wharves' on Monday. But you must n't work so hard, whatever happens."

"I find that I must n't," replied George, with a weary sigh. "I shall take things easier after this."

"Yes," added Jack, "and I think we can economize a little more."

"How is that possible, unless we learn to live without eating altogether?"

"Not in the matter of diet; we have been — that is to say, *you*, George, have been — rather too severely starved already. The brain-work you do requires a nice, nourishing diet, which you must have, if it can be got. But a dollar and seventy-five cents a week for our room! that is really extravagant, just now. We ought to get a lodging for half that."

"Do you suppose we shall be pushed for our rent to-night?" asked George.

"If we are," laughed his friend, "there 's only one thing to be done. It 's our last resort."

"What 's that?"

"Why, as we have nothing else to pawn but the clothes on our backs, you shall go to bed, — pretending to be sick, you know, — while I put on your clothes, and take my own to the pawnbroker's. Don't you think you could do your writing in bed?"

"Perhaps; or sitting up with the bedclothes wrapped about me, and the door locked."

"Then, when you get tired of the confinement," Jack continued, "I can be sick, and you can put on the clothes and go out. I think we could make one

suit do for both of us; don't you? We 'll keep yours, because it 's a sort of medium fit for both of us, while you could n't wear mine at all." And, as if this proposition were made more than half in earnest, he began to empty his pockets.

"What 's that paper?" George asked, as his friend stopped to read something.

Jack burst into a laugh, as he stood up by the window, in order to get a good light on the paper.

"It 's an advertisement, which a little ragged boy stuffed into my hand as I was coming up Broadway a day or two ago. I did n't look at it; I had forgotten all about it."

And Jack began to read aloud: —

EXTRAORDINARY DEVELOPMENTS!

A NEW SCIENCE!

WONDERS OF BIOLOGY AND MESMERISM!!

SÉANCES WITH PROFESSOR DE WALDO

AND THE CELEBRATED MASTER FELIX!!!

THE MOST ASTONISHING DISCOVERIES OF THE AGE!!

Professor De Waldo has the honor to announce that, having recently returned from Europe, where he has been for some time pursuing his Biological studies, and making Startling Discoveries in the New Science —

"Why, that 's my hand-bill! the very words I wrote for him!" cried George, springing to his feet. "Where 's the manuscript? You 'll see!"

"Word for word!" exclaimed Jack, when the manuscript was found, and compared with the printed hand-bill. "What a rascal your Professor De Waldo must be!"

"The meanest sort of swindler!" George declared, excitedly. "He took my manuscript, pretending to examine it; and then, when I went home to supper, believing he had gone out, he was in reality copying it. Then think of that despicable Master Felix, thrusting it into my face when I went back, and telling me the professor did n't want it!"

"I say, George!" replied Jack, "let 's make trouble for this Professor De Waldo! I 'll go right around to his place with you now, and help you get your money. Let him know he has a couple of desperate fellows to deal with, and that the best thing for him to do is to pay up."

"O Jack! I wish I had your strength and your pluck! But, really, I am too sick to-night."

"Then I 'll go alone. Here! give me the manuscript! I 'll put that and the printed hand-bill into your professor's face, and come to some sort of a settlement with him. Take care of yourself till I come back. If you are called on for the rent, say I have gone for the money."

And Jack, full of wrath and resolution, set off to pay Professor De Waldo a visit.

CHAPTER XXX.

A MUTUAL SURPRISE.

It so chanced that, while the boys were holding this conversation, the Professor of Biological Science was thinking of supper; and that he went out, leaving the room in Murray Street in charge of Master Felix, about the time Jack was taking rapid steps down his lodging-house stairs.

De Waldo's last words to his wonderful pupil were a command not to leave the house for a moment during his absence, but to remain and wait for customers, and keep them until his return. The boy was permitted, however, to go down stairs and stand in the street door; where he had scarcely watched De Waldo out of sight, when he discovered that his blow-pipe was out of ammunition. It was but a few rods to the usual source of supply; and Master Felix, making sure that no customer was at that moment coming to the house, started to run up the street.

After running a block or two, he began to walk. Close by was a large grocery, by the open door of which, among other objects for sale, was an open box of peas. Looking straight before him, like a young man bent on important business in a distant quarter of the city, the young gentleman passed the box, and,

without turning his head, or making a motion of his body, dashed in his open hand, and brought it out clinched.

He was walking on, with an innocent air, as if unconscious of anything in the world but the urgent business that absorbed him, when a man slipped out of the door, darted along the sidewalk, and seized the swinging arm, with the guilty hand still clutching the stolen peas.

The peas were scattered over the pavement in an instant, and Master Felix made a violent struggle to free himself, but the strength of his captor was too much for him. Finding himself fairly caught, he changed his tactics.

"Come! what do you want of me? What have I done?" he exclaimed, with the air of an injured angel.

"Just come with me; and as soon as I get a policeman, you 'll find out."

"Just had a dozen peas in my hand! I did n't know I had 'em, I 'm so absent-minded! Ask the professor!"

"You 're absent-minded every time you pass our place," replied the man. "I 've watched you. You go by two or three times a day, and put your hand into something every time. I don't believe in that kind of absence of mind!"

"I 'm a mesmeric subject," pleaded Master Felix. "Take me to the professor, — he 'll tell you all about it. I don't know half the time what I do."



"JUST COME WITH ME!"

"I'll teach you to know, when you pass our place!" And poor Master Felix, in spite of his wailing and entreating, was dragged into the store.

Thus it happened that when Jack reached the professor's room, he found nobody to guard it. The street door being open, he mounted the stairs; and,

having knocked at the door of the "saloon" in the rear, up one flight (according to the directions in the hand-bill), and got no response, he opened, and entered.

A dismal lamp was burning on a desk in the farthest corner, by the dim light of which the chamber looked so little like a "saloon" that Jack at first thought he had got into the wrong place. But seeing a pile of the professor's hand-bills lying beside the lamp, and more scattered on a table in the centre of the room, he concluded that the "saloon" was a part of the humbug, and sat down on a sofa beside the door, to wait.

"Somebody must be coming soon, or the place would n't be left in this way," thought he. And, being somewhat fatigued, he stretched himself at length, in order to be rested and strong for action by the time the professor arrived.

Ten, fifteen, twenty minutes elapsed. The lamp burned more and more dimly, and seemed ready to go out. Jack would have grown impatient, if he had n't been so tired; as it was, he had almost fallen asleep, when a step on the landing and a hand on the door aroused him, and he started up just as a man entered the room.

"That you, my boy? Almost in the dark!" cried a voice, which sounded strangely familiar to Jack's ear. "You did n't fill the lamp to-day! What did I tell you, if you forgot it agin?" And a rapid hand made a plunge at Jack's hair.

Jack dodged, and parried the thrust with his arm. He did not move from the sofa, but, in his astonishment, sat crouched at the end of it, while the man passed on.

"I 'll excuse you this once; you 've done so wonderful to-day. Don't you see how complete it works? I put you into the magnetic state for a customer, and we git his half a dollar, anyway. Then, if he 's sick, you prescribe my medicine, and we git a dollar more. We 're in clover. This is better 'n the 'Lectrical 'Lixir. I told ye, when that bust up, jest how it would be. Think of your developin' into a mesmeric subject; the celebrated Master Felix! ha, ha! Here 's your supper, — a nice leg of cold chicken, and some brown bread I slipped off the plate at the eatin'-house, and brought away in my pocket-handkerchief. Thought I might as well save it; you see, I remembered my dear boy!"

The professor spread the handkerchief open on the table, and turned to prick up the wick of the expiring lamp.

"The laws of biological science is so curi's!" he rattled on, while Jack never stirred from his corner. "I put you into the state, — and everybody can see 't you 're in a abnormal condition, — and you show, by tellin' things, that you 're a kind of clairvoyant; and yet I can make ye see and say anything I please. I tried it to-day when the old woman was here, that wanted to find out, through you, who stole her silver comb. You described the young woman that had

her comb, though she could n't decide what young woman it was; then I willed you to tell her she would die of a dropsy within a year, if she did n't take some medicine. She bought *my* medicine, of course. 'T was a beautiful experiment. Ain't this better 'n makin' a slave of yourself on a farm, Master Felix? But why don't you eat your supper?"

Jack, now quite recovered from his first surprise, took a chair at the table, and rested his arms upon the leaf, while he watched the professor. He was hungry enough to act out the part of Master Felix admirably, by eating the supper, had it not been for a certain foolish prejudice against the De Waldo handkerchief.

The professor, finding that the lamp burned pretty well after the wick was pricked up, placed it on the table, and, seating himself opposite Jack, took from his pocket a loose handful of bank-notes, which he began to spread out before him.

"Ah, look at that pile!" said he, merrily. "Ain't that good for sore eyes, my boy? But why don't you — "

At this moment, the boy's strange attitude appearing to attract his attention, he glanced across the table. Their eyes met, in the full light of the lamp. The professor shrank back.

"Y-y-you!" he gasped out. "J-Jack Hazard!"

"Good-natered John Wilkins!" said Jack, without moving from his place, still resting his arms on the table, while he looked steadily at the professor.

CHAPTER XXXI.

JACK AND THE PROFESSOR.

"Ha! ha! my young friend! I never was so taken!" said the professor, rallying quickly, and assuming an air of gayety. "I thought 't was my dear boy. Where is *he?* How come *you* here?"

"I called on business," replied Jack, quietly. "How's Phineas?"

"You mean — ha — Master Felix; for he's Master Felix now, the celebrated clairvoyant. He's cheerful; he's lovely," said the professor, airily. "Was n't he here when you come in?"

"There was nobody here; so I sat down to wait."

"Aha! That's very strange. Where can the rogue have gone? And — my dear friend!" said the professor, nervously, — for he appeared strangely to suspect the friendliness of Jack's intentions, — "to what do I owe the honor of this visit? It's so long since I had the pleasure!"

"As long ago as when you were in the 'Lectrical 'Lixir business, and Phin was the son of poor but honest parents, who blew your trumpet for you, after you had cured him of a whole catalogue of diseases!" said Jack, sarcastically. "I remember that *good-natered* little interview on the circus ground!"

"You played a shrewd game, I must confess!" said the other, with a forced laugh. "And I love a shrewd game, though I be the victim, as I've often had occasion to observe. You *was* shrewd, and I don't resent it."

"And how have you and Phin — excuse me, I mean Master Felix — been flourishing since then?" Jack inquired.

"On the hull, finely! We've had our ups and downs; but variety is the spice of life, you know; and all's well that ends well; and here we be at last, on the top wave of fortune," added the professor, pricking at the wick of the lamp.

"You've an eloquent hand-bill here," said Jack.

"You've read it? And admired it, I hope! Ain't it tremenjuous? Takes with our sort of customers wonderful!"

"You must have had help in writing it."

"Well, to be honest, I had; for I don't pretend to hold the pen of a ready writer myself. I furnished the p'ints, and employed one of the most brilliant young men of genius about town to write 'em out; a very noted young author."

"Ah!" said Jack. "If he is very noted, perhaps I have heard of him."

"Very likely. Ah — let me see — I can't recall his name. Very young; but O, what talent!"

"You must have to pay such talent very liberally."

"Liberally? Munificently! I pay everybody mu-

nificently now. Why, sir, the writing of that hand-bill cost me a round twenty dollars."

"Professor De Waldo, or Dr. Lamont, or Dr. Doyley, or good-natered John Wilkins, — in short George Reddington," said Jack, with a determined look, "you and I know each other pretty well, and there 's no use of your trying your little humbug with me. I think you 'll remember the name of your talented young author in a minute. Here 's the original copy of your hand-bill, with his name written up there in the corner. It was a shrewd game you played with him; but *I* don't so much admire *your* kind of shrewdness. I 'm his friend, and I 've come to collect, not the twenty dollars you say you paid him, but the five dollars you promised and did n't pay."

The professor looked at the manuscript, and smiled a very skinny smile.

"Well, this is a double surprise! To think you should be the friend of that young man!" he said, politely returning the paper.

"Will you pay me?" said Jack.

"I am your humble servant," replied De Waldo, with mock courtesy; "but when you talk of pay, I must beg respectfully to be excused. Payin' ain't in my line of business."

"Have n't you the least atom of honor or shame about you?" cried Jack. "I think I never heard of so mean a trick. You hired my friend to write the hand-bill, copied it secretly, and then gave it

back to him, with the pretence that it did n't suit you! I 've heard that thieves and pickpockets have a little honor; if so, you are not fit for their company."

The professor seemed to feel these earnest home-thrusts; for after a moment's pause, during which he hastily pricked up the lamp-wick once more, he replied: —

"Come, now! be good-natered! le' 's both be good-natered, and I 'll tell ye the honest truth. I had n't the cash when your friend brought in the hand-bill, or I should n't have took the trouble to shave him so close."

"I accept the apology," said Jack, "provided you 'll make it good by paying him, now that you have the cash. No pretence of poverty now, George Reddington! You had a handful of money before you, just as you noticed me here in Phin's place. Then you snatched it up. It 's there in your pocket now."

"My young friend," said the professor, laying his hand on the said pocket, and bowing, — for he had again risen to his feet, — "it 's a matter of principle with me never to pay an old debt."

Jack laughed scornfully. "A quack — a humbug — like you, to talk of principle!"

"Is it possible," grinned De Waldo, "that you don't believe in our new science?"

"Whether I do or not, I don't believe in such professors of it as you. I *do* believe there 's some-

thing in mesmerism and clairvoyance, — a great deal; and I think it is too bad that as soon as any such new thing is talked of, you sharpers and ignoramuses should rush to take it up, and make it a nuisance, and disgust honest-minded people with it before they have a chance to know anything else about it. That 's my opinion of you and your science."

"I must say," replied De Waldo, still grinning, but with sparkling malice, "your remarks is gittin' ruther personal."

"And as for your paying old debts," Jack went on, "you paid one to me once, and you did seem to regard it as a sad mistake at the time."

"Yes! and for that very thing I owe you no goodwill!" cried De Waldo, shaking his fist at Jack, who still quietly kept his seat. "Your friend has sent the wrong man to collect his bills; and now I tell you to clear out of this room, or you 'll git kicked out!"

"Lay your hands on me," said Jack, "and something worse will happen to you than has happened to your son Phineas already."

"You know what — what has happened to him?" said the professor, again changing his manners, and looking decidedly anxious.

"Pay me the five dollars I 've come for, and I 'll tell you what has happened to him. If you don't pay me, I 'll stay here and be your Master Felix in a way you won't like. I 'm out of business just now,

and I 'll just give my time to exposing your miserable humbug to every customer who comes to your door. Though there 'll be no need of my troubling myself, unless you get your Master Felix back again."

"Now, look here!" said the professor, more and more disturbed. "Be reasonable; and le' 's come to an understandin'. What has happened to my boy?"

"Will you give me five dollars?"

"How do I know you 've a right to collect the money?"

"There 's the manuscript; that shows you plainly enough, if you really care anything for the right."

"Settle for two dollars, and tell me where my boy is, and it 's a bargain."

"Five dollars!" insisted Jack.

"But how do I know you re'lly know anything about him?"

"George Reddington, you 've lied to me about as often as you ever spoke to me, but you know I never lied to you. Now, I say, something has happened to Phin, — something bad enough, too, — and I promise to tell you what it is, if you pay me; otherwise, I get my pay in a way that will be a great deal worse for you."

"Jack," replied the professor, more seriously than he had yet spoken, "I don't like you, that 's a fact; but I trust you. Take three dollars, and here 's your money."

Jack saw a chance of getting his five dollars, if he



"TAKE THREE DOLLARS, AND HERE 'S YOUR MONEY."

insisted upon it; but he chose to accept the smaller sum, for good reasons, — partly because he knew that George would have been glad to get so much, and would have thought himself well paid; but chiefly because he feared lest, if the professor held out a few minutes longer, something might occur to break off

the negotiation. In short, he believed Phin might at any moment return.

"Well," said he, pocketing the three dollars with a stern smile of satisfaction, "you've given me the credit of being truthful; and now I'll tell you what I know of Phin. As I was coming by a grocery-store on this street, I saw a man dragging a boy into the door, for stealing something out of the open boxes or barrels outside. I saw only the boy's back, and I didn't recognize him; but now, the more I think of it the surer I am that boy was Phineas, though he has grown large and coarse. The man was threatening to give him over to the police."

"How was he dressed?"

"He had on a brown coat and a sort of Scotch cap."

"That's him!" exclaimed the professor, with a gleam of excitement in his lank face. "He was after them peas, to blow in his confounded blow-pipe. I wish I had smashed it, as I threatened, long ago! I can't spare him now, or I'd let him go, — and good enough for him, for gittin' into such a scrape!"

Jack went out with the professor, and accompanied him to the grocery where Phin had been captured. He could not help feeling an interest in his old companion, and a desire to meet him again. But the luckless youth had already been given over to the police; and Jack was too eager to run home with his money, to think of following Phin's fortunes further that night.

CHAPTER XXXII.

AN UNFORESEEN CALAMITY.

He found George in bed, almost too ill to care for the money, or to listen to his story.

Jack was alarmed. He sat on the bed, in the comfortless room, lighted only by a dim reflection from the street, and felt his friend's hot brow and palm; and asked, imploringly, to know what he could do for him.

"For we've a pile of money now, you know, and you can have whatever you like!"

"I've been thinking — if I could have just a taste of lemonade — you are so good!" faltered poor George, in a feeble voice.

"Wait five minutes!" cried Jack; and he rushed from the room.

In the overflow of his heart, he bought half a dozen lemons and half a pound of sugar at the nearest grocery. Then, noticing some fine oranges in the window, and remembering the wistful looks George had cast upon them the last time they passed that way together, he bought some of these, together with a pound of the nicest soda-biscuit. A few dried herrings, the usual supply of bread and cheese, and two candles, completed his stock of purchases. The

result was that when he reached home, and paid his rent to the landlord, — who dunned him for it as they met on the stairs, — he found that, of the three dollars he had collected that evening of Professor De Waldo, he had but fifteen cents left.

"No matter!" thought he. "George must have what he needs, anyway; I'll trust to luck for the rest. Cheer up, old fellow!" he cried, as he entered the room. "I've something for you."

The first thing was to light one of the candles. The next, to mix some lemonade in a glass, and stir it with an old case-knife (their only utensil), which they kept hidden in the table drawer.

"Now drink, George; I know it will do you good!" Jack said, taking the glass to the bedside.

"Won't you — drink a little yourself — first?" George said faintly; even in his great distress thinking of his friend's comfort before his own.

"Never fear but I'll look out for myself!" exclaimed Jack; and he supported George while he drank.

To his disappointment, George sipped only a few drops, and then sank back on his pillow, complaining of a violent headache.

"Can't you suck one of these oranges?" Jack asked, with anxious sympathy. "You remember how good they looked to you the other day."

"By and by — not now — you are so kind, dear Jack! Let me rest a little while. O dear!"

George turned his face to the wall; and soon,

from his heavy breathing, Jack thought he must be asleep.

"Sleep is what he needs more than anything. He'll be better in the morning. Poor fellow! he must n't work so hard, and starve himself in this way any more!"

It was not long before Jack himself went to bed; but he had scarcely fallen asleep, when his friend's restless tossing and moaning waked him, and he jumped up to light the candle again, and see what could be done.

In this way he was up and down all night, gladly sacrificing himself, but without the satisfaction of feeling that all his care and watching brought his poor friend any relief.

The good woman of the house had but just entered her kitchen the next morning, when a haggard, anxious boy's face appeared at the door. It was the face of Jack.

"Mrs. Dolberry! if you will be so good, ma'am, — my friend is in a bad way, — I don't know what to do for him, — and if you will be so kind as to come and see him!"

She was a large, coarse woman; and Jack remembered with a pang of remorse the instinctive dislike both he and George had felt towards her, and the fun they had made of her in their merrier days. But within that mass of flesh, which certainly appeared open to ridicule as it climbed with toilsome steps and asthmatic breath the lodging-house stairs, there was

a woman's heart, as Jack discovered now, in time of need.

"Here, Janet!" she cried; "finish slicin' up these taters. Slash on some coal soon as ever the fire gits kindled a little. I'll be back in a second."

The idea of her making the journey to the upper story and back in that brief space of time, was one of those ridiculous things which the boys would have had some mirth over a few days ago. It was certainly no trifling undertaking for a creature of her short breath and vast bulk; but she set about it heroically, placing a hand on her knee to aid her ascent, and making a forcible gasp at every step, like a man chopping wood.

Jack, however, — though, in his impatience, he thought she had never been so slow, — felt no disposition to laugh at her now.

She entered the room, glanced quickly about it, then looked at George, and finally laid her hand gently on his head.

"Your chum is in a burnin' fever," she said. "I knowed it soon as ever I set eyes on him. How long has he been so?"

"Only since last evening."

"He's got all run down; I've been feelin' all along 't suthin' wa' n't jest right with you two boys; but 't wa' n't none o' my business, long as ye paid yer rent. Has he had his meals reg'lar?"

"Not very," Jack confessed.

"I thought so. Goin' 'thout warm dinners 's

enough to make anybody sick. I wondered whether you wa' n't perty poor. But them oranges don't look as if you was; I can't afford oranges, present prices."

"I thought they would be good for him," Jack explained. "What *would* be good?"

"A doctor can tell ye better 'n I can. I can mos' gen'ly nu's' my own children; but I don't want nothin' to do with a case of fever. Been out of his head, hain't he?"

"Some of the time; he has talked of all sorts of things."

"My 'pinion, he 's dangerously sick," said the woman; "and the sooner ye bring the doctor to him the better."

"What doctor do you recommend?" Jack asked, with despair at his heart.

"Doctor Maxwell, jest a few doors down this street. Ain't nobody better 'n him. Terms reasonable too. He comes to them that employs him reg'lar, for half a dollar a visit. He 'll come to anybody in my house for that."

Jack seized his cap. He did not know where the half-dollars were coming from to pay the doctor; and he did not stop to consider; he only knew that the doctor must be called.

"I am very thankful to you," he murmured.

"Don't think of sich a thing. I only wish ye 'd axed me in afore. And now if there 's anything else I can do for ye, — any hot water, when the doctor

comes, or Injin meal and soft soap for poultice, — there 's nothin' like a soft-soap poultice to sweat off diseases, — or a light and nourishin' broth for your friend, soon as he 's able to take it, — you 've only to call on me, and I 'll jump at the chance."

Jack did not smile, as he would once have done, at the thought of the excellent woman, with all her flesh, jumping at anything. Tears were in his eyes, as he thanked her again, and hastened to bring the doctor.

The doctor came. He examined the patient, looked grave, shook his head, and mixed some medicines with a solemn air, which filled Jack with horrible dread. Having explained how and when they were to be taken, and administered the first dose himself, he said, in answer to Jack's anxious questions, —

"He 's pretty sick, — that 's all I 'm prepared to say now. I can judge of the case better, after I see what effect the medicines have on him. He can't have too careful nursing. Be sure and not neglect anything I have told you. I 'll look in again in the course of the day."

He came again at noon; but discovered no favorable symptoms in his patient. At five o 'clock he paid a third visit, and had a consultation with Mrs. Dolberry (who waylaid him in the entry) before coming up stairs.

George had been delirious all the afternoon; talking incoherently of Vinnie, the pickpockets, Mrs. Libby and Mr. Manton, manuscripts and magazines,

pawnbrokers' shops and Bowery Hall. Once he burst into a wild laugh, and, sitting up in bed, pointed at the mantel-piece, which he imagined to be the stage of the colored minstrels.

"Jack, as *Miss Dinah!* see him dance! Funny as anything can be, till they bring out *my* piece! Where's Fitz Dingle?" Then, after listening to some imaginary conversation, he added seriously, "They say Fitz Dingle has gambled away his bad eye; but I don't think it a very great loss."

Half the time he did not know Jack; and if he chanced to know him at one moment, he took him for somebody else the next.

It was at this crisis that Dr. Maxwell made his third visit. After again examining the patient, he turned to Jack: —

"It is my duty to say to you that your friend is threatened with a dangerous fever; and that, if he has any relations, they should be notified at once. It will be impossible for you to give him all the care he needs; and it will be putting rather too much on Mrs. Dolberry to have him sick in her house, unless you can get some assistance."

"O, I can take care of him! I won't leave him, day or night!" cried Jack, quite wild in his distress. "Only tell me he will live!"

"I hope he may, — I shall do all I possibly can for him," replied the doctor. "And be sure you do your part, so that you may have nothing to regret. I 'll look in again at about nine o'clock."

The climax of Jack's woes seemed to be reached; and after the doctor's departure he gave way, for the first time, to feelings of utter grief and despair. He could see no hope but that George would die; he would certainly die, he thought, unless help could be speedily had; for what could *he* do, alone with him in the great city, without money and without friends?

He blamed himself for everything; and now the memory of their one quarrel came back to him with a pang which he thought would never cease to rankle in his breast, unless he could hear George say once more that he freely forgave him all.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A MYSTERY IN JACK'S POCKET.

But Jack was not a lad to give himself up to the bitterness of despair, when there was something to be done.

That he might have nothing more to regret, he resolved to take the doctor's advice, and write to George's friends. There, on the table, was the letter to Vinnie, which had been written the day before, but not sealed; and he determined to enclose a few words of his own in that.

This done, he wrote the long-contemplated letter to Mr Chatford, asking for help. His pride was now all gone; and he blamed himself bitterly for not writing before. "If I had," thought he, "George might have been saved from this. Now it will be a week before I can expect a reply, — and who knows what may happen before then?"

Mr. Dolberry came in, — a brisk little man, a dozen years younger than his wife, and such a pygmy, compared with her, that the boys used to nickname him Little Finger. He brought a plate of toast, with a message from the Hand to which (as the boys fabled) he belonged.

"She says you must eat it, or you 'll be sick your-

self," he said to Jack, setting down the plate. "You must look out about that. I don't know what under the sun would become of you both, or of us, if you should be took down. You 'd have to go to the hospital, for aught I see. And I ain't sure but what your chum 'll have to go, as 't is. Doctor says he 's perty sick."

"I can't let him go to the hospital!" Jack exclaimed. "He never shall be taken away from me, if he lives. If he dies — then I don't care what happens."

"If you 've got plenty of money," said the little man, "you may keep him out of the hospital; though I 'd advise you not to. It will be jest as well for him, and mabby better, to go; and enough sight better for you, to let him go. You 'll be free to run about your business then, as you can't now. It 's an awful job — a terrible sacrifice — to take care of a person in a fever, day and night; and I don't think you know what it is you undertake."

If, conveyed by this sincere advice, the selfish thought entered Jack's mind, that he might shirk his duty to his friend, — abandon him to the charities of a public hospital, and the care of strangers, while he, unhindered, looked out for his own welfare, — he received that thought only to abhor it, and reject it with scorn. How would he feel, shipping as a hand on board a boat, and returning to the home and friends he had so rashly left, while, for aught he knew, the companion he had deserted

might be dying under the hands of hired nurses, and calling for him in vain?

"You are very kind — Mrs. Dolberry is very kind," he replied. "I hope we sha' n't trouble you too much. But I shall keep my friend with me if I can."

Jack passed another fearful night with his patient, giving him his medicines, with occasionally a sip of lemonade, and trying to soothe him in his fits of delirium. He was now so tired that, at the slightest opportunity that occurred, whether it found him reclining in the bed or sitting in a chair, he could catch a few minutes' sleep.

It was an unspeakable relief when morning came, and with it the doctor. He had furnished all necessary medicines on his previous visits, but he now wrote a prescription for something which he seemed to consider very important, to be bought at the apothecary's. It would cost, he said, about half a dollar.

Jack trembled. For his friend's sake he was afraid to say that they had, between them, but fifteen cents in the world; thinking the doctor would, with that knowledge, drop the case at once, and that George would then have to be carried to the hospital.

"If I live," Jack vowed to himself, after the doctor was gone, "I 'll pay him for his visits some day, — somehow! And I 'll get this medicine, too, and pay for it; there must be *some* way!"

An idea, which he had suggested to George, mostly in jest, now occurred to him in a more serious aspect.

He had proposed, we remember, that they should take turns at pretending sickness and lying abed, in order that one suit of clothes might serve for both, while the other suit went to the pawnbroker's. But George was now sick in earnest; and why should not the plan be carried out in earnest?

"I'll put on his clothes, and pawn mine, for mine will bring more than his. They ought to bring five dollars; and that ought to buy his medicines, and what little I shall need to live on, till we get money either from his folks or mine. He won't want his clothes before then; if he does, he shall have 'em, and I'll go to bed."

With this thought, Jack began to clear his pockets again. Only two things of any importance dropped out, besides some pawnbrokers' tickets.

The first was a business card, — that of Josiah Plummerton, the old gentleman who had kindly loaned the boys money to pay their fares, after their pockets were picked on the steamboat. They had never yet hunted him up, because they had not seen themselves in a condition to repay his loan, and did not care to ask a second favor from him until they could properly acknowledge the first. But now Jack thought that, as a last resort, he would apply to their old friend.

As he was looking at the card, and shaking his pockets, a small bright stone, or bit of glass, fell out

and rolled across the floor. He picked it up, and looked at it with surprise. How such a thing ever came in his pocket was a complete mystery to him. It had facets and angles, and it reflected the light with beautiful prismatic rays. He would have thought it a diamond, but for the absurdity of supposing that diamonds could be found tumbling about the world in that way, and getting into boys' pockets.

"It's an imitation of a diamond, though," thought Jack; though that easy conjecture did not help him at all towards a solution of the mystery.

He laid the stone with the card on the mantelpiece, and was proceeding to roll up his clothes in a compact bundle, when something — he could hardly have told what — caused him to change his mind; and, unfolding them again, after some hesitation he put them on. Perhaps he reflected that, if he was to call on Mr. Plummerton, he had better appear in his own attire.

Soon Mrs. Dolberry came to bring him a cup of coffee and a baked potato, and to see how his friend was.

"And now," said she, "give me all your dirty clothes; they can go into my wash as well as not. You boys don't 'pear as though you'd had a woman to look after ye, lately! Can't you put on a clean shirt, and give me the one you're wearin'?"

"All our underclothes are soiled," Jack was forced to confess; "and it's too bad to trouble you with 'em."

"Never mind the trouble. But how comes it about that a couple of nice-appearin' young men like you two don't have your washin' 'tended to? Your socks ain't so bad off, — though they look as though you had darned 'em yourselves; but your shirts!"

The truth was, that the boys had washed their own socks, and darned them with materials George had brought with him for that purpose; but the washing and doing-up of shirts was something quite beyond them.

As Jack hesitated in his reply, the good woman went on: —

"I do believe that I guessed right in the first place; you're short of money! If that's so, the sooner you let me know it the better."

Whatever else he did, Jack could not lie to her. As he began to speak, his tongue was loosed, his heart opened, and he poured forth the story of their misfortunes.

"Wal! now I'm glad I know!" she said, dashing a big tear from her cheek. "It's a hard case; but now you must see the folly of tryin' to take care o' your sick friend and keep him in my house. Me and my husband'll do everything we can for ye; but you ain't sure your friends will send you a dollar; and there'll be doctors' bills, and everything; and my doctor can git your chum into the hospital, where he'll have good care; and that, as I see, is the only thing to be done. Now eat your breakfast, and think

it over, while I send this prescription to the 'pothecary's, with the money to pay for 't."

Jack drank the coffee, but he could not eat a mouthful, he was so full of misery.

In a little while Mr. Dolberry brought the medicine, and helped to give the patient a dose of it; after which he consented to remain by the bedside while Jack went out to find a friend.

That friend was Mr. Josiah Plummerton. He was proprietor of a sail-loft, over on the East River. Jack was little acquainted in that part of the city; he had a good distance to travel, and it took him half an hour to find the place. Then he learned, to his dismay, that Mr. Plummerton had not come to his office that morning, and that his place of residence was in Brooklyn.

When Jack took the card from the mantel-piece, he also slipped the little stone into his vest-pocket. He thought no more about it until, as he was returning home, disconsolate, from his fruitless journey, like a flash of light the recollection came to him of the pickpocket's diamond ring.

"This is the missing stone!" exclaimed Jack to himself. "But it is most likely false; everything is false about these fellows. I 'll show it to somebody."

Passing a jeweller's door, as he was crossing the Bowery, he went in, and asked a bald-headed man behind the counter to look at the stone, and give an opinion of it.

The man glanced at it; then, looking keenly at

Jack, as if the fact of his possessing it was rather suspicious, he asked, —

"Is it yours?"

"I think I shall claim it," Jack replied. "I had my pocket picked of forty dollars, in Albany, a few weeks ago; and the rogue left this in its place."

"It dropped out of his ring," said the man, growing interested. "If he got only forty dollars, he did n't make a very good trade."

"How so?" cried Jack, surprised; for, even if a diamond, he had not thought of its being worth more than eight or ten dollars, such was his ignorance of stones. "He got nearly thirty dollars from a friend of mine at the same time."

"You have rather the best end of the bargain, after all," the man replied, examining the stone.

"Is it really — a diamond?"

"It is a diamond, and a fine one."

"Is it worth the money we were robbed of, — seventy dollars?"

"Yes, more than double that," replied the jeweller, passing the stone back to its present possessor. "You made a good trade. That stone never cost less than a hundred and fifty or sixty dollars."

"Will you buy it?" cried Jack, eagerly.

"I 'd rather not take a stone that you came by in that way. Not but what I think you are honest," the jeweller added, seeing Jack's countenance fall; "but it seems you had it of a rogue, and very likely he got it dishonestly."



"IT IS A DIAMOND, AND A FINE ONE."

Jack felt the force of the argument, and was a good deal shaken by it.

"Then, if I can't sell it, what's the good of having made so good a trade, as you call it? I don't want a diamond; but my friend is sick, and we have no money, and —" Jack began to choke.

"Perhaps you can find somebody willing to buy it of you, and take the risk of the rightful owner coming to claim it," replied the jeweller. "Or" — observing Jack's distress — "if your want is only temporary, and a small sum will answer your purpose, I will lend you ten dollars on it; for you seem to be an honest lad."

Jack could not express his thanks. He was only too glad to leave the costly trifle in the jeweller's hands, and take the proffered ten dollars, for immediate use.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE POLICE COURT.

Crossing over to Broadway, he passed along Leonard Street; and was just opposite the great city prison, — from its gloomy style of architecture, and the use it served, called the Tombs, — when somebody ran lightly after him, and clapped him on the shoulder.

Jack turned, and to his surprise encountered the polite Professor De Waldo.

"I was just thinking of Phineas, and wondering — " began Jack.

"Wonder no more! Look here; and, if you have n't seen it already, be amazed, be indignant!" And the professor, taking a newspaper from his pocket, pointed to a paragraph headed, "Master Felix in a Fix."

Glancing his eye over the item, Jack saw that it was a facetious account of the arrest and incarceration of the celebrated mesmeric subject on Saturday evening.

"Now where 's your friend, the famous author, the young man of genius?" cried De Waldo. "I 've another job for him; and I 'll pay him this time, and pay him well. I want him to write a reply to

this paragraph, describing the strange things Master Felix does under the influence, and then crack up his clairvoyant powers — get it into all the papers — make a magnificent advertisement, don't you see?"

Jack saw, and marvelled at the father who could thus coolly think of turning his son's misfortune and disgrace to a pecuniary advantage.

"Where is Phineas now?" he asked.

"Before the police court, I expect, by this time. But that'll be all right; I've seen the man who had him arrested; I've an understanding with him." And the professor touched his pocket. "Won't you come and see my boy? Then git your friend to write us up."

Jack replied that his friend was not in a condition to write up anybody; but, thinking this might be his only opportunity of seeing Phin, he accompanied the professor.

They found the court-room crowded with spectators, many of them belonging to the lowest class of society, — rogues and roughs, whose very garments reeked with the atmosphere of vice; some attracted solely by a morbid curiosity to witness the coarse drama of life enacted every Monday morning on the stage of the police court; others, by a personal interest in the fate of the prisoners.

A number of these were ranged on a long bench against the wall, behind a bar, guarded by constables. They were mostly a vicious-looking set, being men and boys arrested since Saturday, nearly all for

drunkenness, assault and battery, or petty theft. In this row were two persons whom Jack recognized, with mingled feelings of surprise and heart-sickness.

One was Master Felix. He sat at the end of the row, twirling his cap, and looking anxiously among the spectators, until his eyes rested on the professor, and his face suddenly lighted up with a gleam of hope. The next moment he saw Jack; and his countenance changed to a queer expression of shame and grinning audacity.

The other person whom Jack recognized sat between two burly ruffians, with whose coarse garments and features his own fashionable attire and polite face presented a curious contrast. Yet his coat had not the usual gloss; his linen appeared sadly soiled and crumpled; his hair and whiskers lacked the customary careful curl; his chin bristled with a beard of two days' growth; his gay features were downcast; in short, the whole man had so much the appearence of having passed a dismal Sunday in the Tombs, that at first Jack hardly knew him. But, looking again, he was sure of his man. It was Mr. Manton.

And who was that kind-looking old gentleman just leaning over the bar to speak to him? Jack had a side view of his face: it was one he could never forget, — that of his old friend, Mr. Plummerton, whom he had been to find that very morning.

"Does *he* know Mr. Manton?" thought Jack.

Then he remembered that the woman who talked with him on the steamboat, when he was passing around the hat, had proved to be Mr. Manton's wife; and it now occurred to him that she and the old gentleman might then have been travelling in company.

An Irishman, who was arraigned for beating his wife, on her own complaint, having been let off with a light fine, which she cheerfully paid (her heart relenting towards him), the next case called was that of Mr. Manton.

It was pitiful to see the fallen gentleman stand dangling his damaged hat, while a policeman testified to having found him asleep in the gutter, with the curbstone for his pillow, very early on Sunday morning; and also to having picked him up in a similar condition twice before.

No legal defence was set up; but Mr. Plummerton, standing by the judge's desk, said a few words to him in a low voice. The judge then imposed a fine (which Mr. Plummerton paid), and gave Mr. Manton some earnest advice, to which that gentleman listened with humble attention. The case was then dismissed.

As Mr. Manton was leaving the court-room, he passed near Jack, whom he evidently knew; however, as he did not seem to be in his usual spirits, Jack did not accost him. But when Mr. Plummerton was passing afterwards, Jack put out his hand.

It was a moment before the old gentleman recog-

nized him; then he exclaimed, "Ah, I remember! the steamboat! You are one of the young fellows who had their pockets picked. And how have you got on since?"

"Rather poorly, some of the time; and now my friend is sick. I have been to see you once, and I am going again soon."

"Do so. I have thought of you more than once. But what's your business here?"

"That boy at the end of the row of prisoners is an old acquaintance of mine; and I just ran in, on his account."

"Ah! Where have you known him?"

"He was brought up by the man I lived with in the country, — Mr. Chatford. He is a relative of the family, and he was adopted as Mr. Chatford's own son. But — you see that man talking with the policeman, over there? That is the boy's father, — a regular quack and swindler; he came along, and got the boy away from the best place in the world, and now they travel together."

"I'm glad you've no worse errand, for yourself, in this place!" said the old gentleman. "It's bad enough to be obliged to come on account of others. Call and see me. I am in a hurry now."

Another petty case having been quickly disposed of, that of Master Felix came next in turn. The grocer who had caused his arrest did not appear against him; but the policeman who had taken the prisoner in charge made a brief explanation.

The grocer, he said, had acted impulsively, having been much annoyed by repeated acts of pilfering from his exposed boxes; but Professor De Waldo had satisfied him that the lad did not really intend to steal, and had engaged that nothing of the kind should again occur.

The professor himself then offered to make a speech, and began by describing the peculiar powers of his pupil, "the celebrated Master Felix"; but the judge cut him short, and the prisoner was discharged, much to the chagrin of De Waldo, who had counted on the occasion for advertising his business in Murray Street.

As Master Felix was going out, Jack stepped up to him, and kindly gave him his hand.

"How are ye, Phin?"

"Hello, Jack!" said the "celebrated," rather sullenly. But, seeing that his old friend's manner was really kind, and not sarcastic, as he had reason to suppose it would be, he added, more openly, "What's the news? How are all the folks at home?"

"All well; and I am glad you speak of it as *home*," replied Jack.

"That's old habit; it's no more a home to me, and never can be!"

"I don't know about that, Phin. They often speak of you, and I know, if you should wish to go back, you would be welcomed, — by Mrs. Chatford, especially; for she can never speak of you without tears coming into her eyes."

Phin appeared touched. "*She* was always good enough to me!" he muttered.

"Who was not good to you? Phin, you know you left a good home, and good friends, when you left them; and if you would tell the truth, you would own that you were much better off then than you have ever been since."

"I don't know, — there 's no use talking about that now. But what are you doing here in the city?"

"I can't tell you now, — I must hurry back to a sick friend; but I want to see you again, Phin, before I leave New York. Think of what — "

Jack did not finish his sentence. His eyes just then fell upon a well-dressed man entering the court-room, the sight of whom put for a moment everything else out of his mind. When, a little later, he again thought of Phin, and looked for him, he was gone, and he saw him no more.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HOW THE DIAMOND FOUND A PURCHASER.

THE person who had thus attracted Jack's attention pressed through the crowd, and, entering within the bar of the court, stood near the rail, talking with a lawyer about some criminal case which was soon coming to trial.

Jack struggled to get near, and, at the first opportunity, reached over the rail and touched the man on the shoulder. The man gave him a frowning look, and was turning away again, when Jack said, in a low voice, "I've something for you."

"I don't know who you are," answered the man, suspiciously.

"I think you do," said Jack, with sparkling eyes. "At all events —"

He whispered a sentence which caused the man quite to change his manner towards him, and answer hurriedly, "Well, hold on! I'll be with you in a minute."

In a minute, accordingly, having finished his conference with the lawyer, he came out, and withdrew with Jack into the vestibule of the court.

"Now, what was that you said? I didn't quite understand."

"I think you understood. But I can repeat it. I said I believed I had a diamond which would fit that ring of yours."

"What do you mean? What ring?"

"Of course, Mr. MacPheeler," said Jack, "your hand was never in my pocket, and so the stone I found there, in place of my purse which was taken by some rogue, can't belong to you. And yet I've the strongest feeling, that somehow that stone will fit your ring. I mean the ring which we saw on your finger — my friend and I — when we met you on a certain evening, not a great while ago."

"Let me look at your stone a moment," said Mr. Alex. MacPheeler.

"Excuse me," replied Jack. "It is for sale, but it is not to be handled in a public place like this. I don't think you need to see it, in order to know the kind of stone it is. If you would like to buy it, say so. If not — good morning."

"I should like a suitable stone for my ring," said MacPheeler, graciously. "If yours is such a one as I think, from your description, I'll give you twenty-five dollars for it."

"The price is one hundred and fifty dollars, Mr. MacPheeler," answered Jack, firmly; "and there's no use of your offering less, — you who know what fine stones are."

"Don't talk quite so loud," said MacPheeler, drawing Jack farther aside. "Do you remember how much you lost with your purse?"

"My friend and I together lost almost seventy dollars."

"Well, I'll give you seventy dollars for the stone. Then you won't lose anything."

"I beg your pardon!" said Jack, turning coldly away. "You have made us a great deal of trouble."

"I?" cried MacPheeler, innocently.

"I mean the rogues who robbed us," said Jack, willing to keep up the little fiction, to please Mr. Manton's friend. "Not ten times seventy dollars would pay us for what we have suffered in consequence of that robbery. Now do you think I will sell out for just the sum we lost? I'll sooner have *one* of the rogues arrested, and use that diamond as evidence against him in court."

"Give me the stone, and here is your money," laughed MacPheeler, unfolding a roll of bills.

"You will have to go with me to a jeweller's over on the corner of the Bowery," said Jack. "There we'll make the exchange, if you wish it. But see here, Alex. MacPheeler! if that money is counterfeit, or if you are not quite in earnest, we may as well part at once."

The pickpocket smiled at Jack's natural distrust of the character of his money and of the honesty of his intentions, and told him to "go ahead."

"But you must give me back my purse, and my friend's pocket-book," said Jack.

"That," replied MacPheeler, "is out of the question. Do you think the man who took them would

be apt to keep such things when they might turn up as evidence against him? Not if he is the kind of man I take him for."

"Well! come on!" said Jack.

Not a word was said by either, as he led the way along the street, occasionally looking behind to see if the rogue was following, until they reached the jeweller's door.

"Now," said Jack, stopping, "here is the place; and shall I call that policeman over, to stand by and see fair play, or will you just pay your money and take the stone, like an honest man?"

MacPheeler nodded and smiled again, in a cold, sinister way, and said Jack need n't mind about the policeman. Then they went in.

"I 've a customer for that stone," Jack said to his bald-headed friend, who appeared surprised at seeing him again so soon. "He knows what it is; you need n't show it. He pays a hundred and fifty dollars for it. Please look carefully at the money."

MacPheeler smiled the same cold, sinister smile, as he tossed three fifty-dollar bank-notes on the counter with silent contempt, and waited for the jeweller to examine them. The notes proving to be genuine, the latter took from a little drawer the stone in question, and passed it over to MacPheeler, who glanced at it, smiled, and put it into his pocket.

"I hope you will not lose your money again so easily!" he said ironically to Jack, as he was leaving the shop.

"I hope you will not be troubled with any more fits!" Jack called after him.

He then returned to the jeweller his loan of ten dollars, pocketed his hundred and fifty, hurriedly telling the story of his last adventure with the pick-pocket; and then ran home in joyful, anxious haste to his sick friend.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL.

THAT day Jack wrote again to Mr. Chatford, recalling his request for a loan of money, and explaining how it happened that he now had enough for present purposes.

He also wrote to Vinnie, begging her not to send the money which George had asked for. "I am sorry to say my poor friend is no better," he wrote; "but, thanks to a strange good fortune, we are no longer in want of anything."

George was, indeed, no better; which means — as it always does in such cases — that he was worse. But now that Jack had money, and with it the power to keep his friend where he could be with him, and watch by his bedside, his hope and courage rose, and never once failed him through all the long, toilsome, terrible days and nights which followed.

Both Mrs. Dolberry and her husband showed him a great deal of kindness at this time; furnishing him his meals, and assisting him occasionally in taking care of his patient. But they were still of the opinion that George should go to the hospital. Either that must be done or a hired nurse would be necessary; for such a boy as Jack, they declared,

could not thus give his life to the patient and hold out long.

"O, if only Mrs. Chatford were here, or Annie Lanman, or some good woman I know!" he thought a hundred times; but he could not bear to call in a stranger.

Such was the state of affairs, when, one morning, as he was hurrying home with some ice to be used in the sick-room, he overtook a young girl carrying a satchel, and looking anxiously at the numbers of the houses along the street.

"What house are you trying to find?" asked Jack, not forgetting, even in his own anxiety and haste, the courtesy due to a young girl, and a stranger.

"The house where Mr. Dolberry lives." And she named the number.

There was something in her sweet, troubled face, and in her winning tones of voice, which would have attracted Jack's attention at any time; for they reminded him, in some subtle way, of the dearest friend he had ever known, — Mrs. Annie Felton Lanman. Of course, the question she asked quickened his interest in her.

"The house is close by; I am going there," he said, and offered to carry her satchel.

In her anxiety she neglected to give him the satchel, and forgot to thank him.

"Is — do you know if George Greenwood —"

She could not finish the question, the answer to which she trembled to hear.

"He is there," Jack hastened to assure her. "I am going to him now."

She made no reply; but Jack could see the tears start from her eyes and her lips quiver as she glided swiftly by his side.

"Here is the place," he said, when they reached the door. "I am George's friend."

"I thought so," she replied, recovering herself a little. "I could n't thank you before. But I am so glad I met you! I am his friend too — his sister — Vinnie."

"I was sure of it!" exclaimed Jack, clasping her hand, with tears of joy. "How did you ever get here?"

"I scarcely know myself. But how — how is he? Tell me the worst at once! I can bear anything, now I know he is alive."

"The worst is — that he is very sick. But we shall save him, — now you have come, I am sure we shall!"

"Can I go right to him?"

"You had better see Mrs. Dolberry first. And you must be prepared. He may not know you, and you will hardly know him. We have had to cut off all that beautiful hair of his."

"O my poor George!" was all the young girl could say, as she followed Jack to Mrs. Dolberry's room.

"Bless me! if you ain't a spunky gal!" was that worthy creature's admiring comment, when told who

Vinnie was, and how far she had travelled alone to come to her sick friend, or brother, as she called him. "It is lucky now he *did* n't go to the hospital! I 'll give you a vacant room I have on the same floor, — you 'll be glad to be near him; though I don't know what you can do for him that ain't done a'ready; for his friend here — *you* can never know, and the poor, sick young man can never know, how *he* has stuck to him, as no brother could ever have stuck closer."

Vinnie understood the spirit of these words, in spite of their broken syntax, and a great wave of hope and gratitude moved her breast, so weak after her long, anxious journey.

Jack hastened to relieve Mr. Dolberry, whom he had left with George, and to get the room and his friend in readiness for Vinnie's visit. A new life seemed to have come to him; a strange comfort, a subtle joy, thrilled every nerve.

"O, if he could know she is here, it would help cure him, I am sure!" thought he. "But he will feel her presence, if he does n't know. How much she is like Annie!"

When she came in, it was some time before she could overcome her pain and grief at seeing George lying there unconscious, so wan, so wasted, his shaven head covered with cloths kept wet with ice-water, — her old playmate, her dear "brother," whom she had last seen full of hope and strength, as he waved his hat towards her, from the deck of the packet-boat,

and sailed away into the sunrise! Had all his plans and aspirations come to this?

She lost little time, however, in tears and vain regrets, but soon began to busy herself in the sick-room as only a woman can do. For Vinnie, though scarcely seventeen years old, was a woman in heart and experience; her life with the Presbits had, as an offset to her many privations, given her strength and self-reliance; and in helping their neighbors in times of sickness she had gained something which she found of far more value now than all the money she had earned.

Vinnie had come dressed in a gown of plain, serviceable, dark stuff, suitable alike for her journey and the tasks she expected to perform at the end of it. Besides that, and the few other clothes she wore, she had brought all her travelling gear in the little satchel she carried in her hand. But, had she shone in silks and diamonds, she could not have appeared more charming than she was, in the eyes of Jack.

Her quickness, lightness, and grace made him feel very clumsy and awkward at first; and she found so many little things to do, which he had not thought of, that he began to think that, after all, he was a very stupid nurse indeed.

Mrs. Dolberry had had a lounge brought into the room for the convenience of the watchers; and it was not long before Vinnie told Jack to lie down on it and sleep, while she sat by the patient, and kept his head cool.



"VINNIE WATCHED THE SICK, WAN FACE OF GEORGE."

"But you need sleep more than I do, — after your journey," replied Jack.

"O no! I rested very well on the steamboat last night, coming down the river. And I have n't been worn out with watching night and day, as you have. Besides, I could n't sleep now; I wish to sit by him, and be quiet for a little while. If anything is needed which I can't do for him, I will wake you."

Her words, although very gently spoken, seemed almost like commands to Jack, who accordingly took the lounge, while she sat alone, in silence, by the bed.

But he did not sleep. He could not help peeping from under his half-closed lids, and watching her, while she, with all her yearning, tender, sad young soul in her eyes, watched the sick, wan face of George.

"How fond she is of him!" thought Jack. "I should almost be willing to lie there sick, if I could have such eyes look so at me!"

Later in the day they had some comfortable talks together; and Jack told her many things about his friend which she did not know before.

"Why did n't he ever tell me of his literary plans?" she said regretfully, — almost jealously, it seemed to Jack, who wondered now that George could have kept back any confidences from such a heart as hers. "But he was always strange, — so very shy and sensitive about many things!" she added, finding the readiest excuse for his conduct. "I am glad he has such a friend in you!"

"But it was the hardest thing for him even to tell me of his plans," replied Jack. "It was necessity that compelled him, — not that he thought half so much of me as he did of you. O, if you could have heard him talk of you, sometimes, as I have heard him!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

JACK AND THE OLD SAIL-MAKER.

From the very day of Vinnie's arrival a slight change for the better began to show itself in George; either because the fever had then run its inevitable course, or because — as Jack always believed — something of her own healthful life, some soft, quiet influence, shed its cooling dew upon him, and did perhaps what all his medicines might not have done, to restore his strength.

With his greater leisure, Jack's resolution returned, to finish up, in some way, the business which had brought him to the city. He now made private inquiries, which he had shrunk from doing at first; and Mrs. Dolberry, to whom he told his story, consulted in his behalf all the old gossips in the neighborhood. As this was the side of the city, between Broadway and the North River, where the child was supposed to have been lost a dozen years before, it was very strange indeed that nobody could be found to remember the circumstance. Cases of lost children were not very uncommon in so large a city; but not one could be heard of to correspond with Jack's own.

He did not neglect the police department; but

his inquiries there met with no better success. He found two or three officers who had been over a dozen years in the service; but they, with all their recollections of curious things which had occurred in their experience during that time, remembered nothing to his purpose. Nor did the examination of any city records give a clew to the rewards which he supposed must have been offered for him.

As he had already examined very thoroughly two files of old city newspapers, and found nothing whatever to encourage him, he was now forced to the conclusion that he was the victim of a strange blunder, or perhaps a downright falsehood, on the part of either Molly or Mother Hazard.

It was about this time that he bethought him again of old Mr. Plummerton, — whose loan of half a dollar he was now well able to repay, — and went once more to find him at his sail-loft.

The old gentleman was out, as before; but this time Jack thought he would go up into the office and wait.

It was a plain, roughly finished room; the bare walls relieved by pictures of vessels under full sail, and by printed slips, mostly clipped from newspapers, pasted above the desk.

Jack amused himself by looking at the pictures, and then began to read the slips, when his eye fell upon the following paragraph: —

Mysterious Disappearance in Brooklyn. — Last Saturday afternoon, Catharine Larcy, an Irish servant living with a family

named Ragdon, in Prince Street, Brooklyn, received permission to go and visit a sister in Williamsburg, and to take with her a young child of her employer, a boy about three and a half years old. Neither child nor nurse has since been heard from, and every effort to trace them has proved unavailing. The Williamsburg sister — who appears to be a respectable person — denies all knowledge of their whereabouts, and says she has not seen Catharine for several weeks, the two not being on friendly terms. They have a brother living in another part of Brooklyn, but he is unable to give any explanation of the mystery. The family and friends of the missing child are in great distress, and a reward of one hundred dollars has been offered by them for any information that may lead to the recovery of the lost darling.

Immediately under this paragraph was pasted the following: —

It seems that Catharine Larcy, the nurse who disappeared so mysteriously with the Ragdon child, last Saturday afternoon, had a quarrel of long standing with her own family on account of her husband, a worthless fellow, whom all her relatives had turned out of doors. She had promised her last employer that she would have no communication with this man ; but it is strongly suspected that he is somehow at the bottom of the mystery. It is not impossible that he has induced her to abduct the child, in order to secure the offered rewards. If so, his opportunity has come, five hundred dollars being now offered by the Brooklyn authorities and the friends of the child, for its recovery.

It also appears that Catharine, only the day before her disappearance, had received from her employer a large amount of wages, which had been accumulating for several weeks.

Jack had barely finished this last paragraph, when Mr. Plummerton came in, and greeted him with his usual kindness.

"I have come to pay my debts," said the visitor, with beaming pleasure in his smile, as he took half a dollar from his pocket and gave it to the old man.

"As a matter of business, I take it," replied Mr. Plummerton. "And glad am I to see it again; not for the sake of the money, you understand, — that 's a trifle, — but because it shows me that you are not only upright boys, but that you have been prospered."

"Prospered after a curious fashion," said Jack, who then told the story of his friend's sickness, and of the pickpocket's diamond.

"Very curious!" exclaimed the old gentleman. "I hope your friend is better now."

"The doctor says the crisis is passed, and that with careful treatment he will get well. But he has had a dreadful time!"

Partly to hide his emotion at the recollection of what he had gone through with George, Jack turned to the printed slips pasted above the desk.

"I was reading something here when you came in."

"So I observed; and you seemed to be interested."

"I have reason to be," said Jack. "I heard of this case before, while making some inquiries with regard to another lost child; but I could n't learn that the mystery was ever cleared up. May be you can tell me."

"It never was cleared up," Mr. Plummerton replied. "What other case of a lost child do you speak of?"

Jack hesitated a moment, then told his story, in which the old gentleman appeared deeply interested.

"And what do you propose to do now?" he asked, after all was told.

"I shall go back home to Mr. Chatford's as soon as my friend Greenwood is well enough, so that I can leave him. Meanwhile, I shall put an advertisement into the papers, as I should have done in the first place, if I had had plenty of money. I don't expect anything from it now; but it will do no harm.

Mr. Plummerton turned to his desk, and appeared about to open it, but hesitated. Jack would have taken this as a hint that it was time for him to withdraw, but for a certain indecision, even agitation, in the old man's manner. He was, moreover, determined to ask some questions regarding that other lost child, of whose case he believed Mr. Plummerton had a personal knowledge.

"Before you leave the city," said the latter, leaving his desk unopened, and turning again to his visitor, "you must go home with me to Brooklyn. Can't you go now?"

"Not very well now; my friends will be expecting me home at noon. But I should like to go with you soon, and learn something more about —" Jack pointed to the printed slips on the wall. "I should have followed up that case, when I first heard of it, if I had n't been out of the city; that fact, and the circumstance of the nurse being with the child, showed that there could be no connection between it and my own case."

The old man made no reply to this, but said: —

"If you can't go home with me to dinner, go over this evening to tea; that will perhaps be better. Call for me here at about five o'clock. Don't fail."

Jack promised, and soon taking leave of the man whose friendship he had gained in so singular a manner, hastened home to his patient.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HIMSELF AGAIN.

THAT afternoon George woke from a long, deep sleep of healthful rest; and for the first time in almost two weeks his own bright, unclouded spirit looked out of the blue eyes that opened upon Jack sitting by his bed.

"Hallo, Jack!" he said, in his old, pleasant tones of voice. "What are you reading?"

"A little of Lord Byron," Jack replied, as carelessly as he could, in the surprise and joy of finding his dear George himself again.

"Byron? But we ate Byron and the other fellows," said George. "Or did I dream it?"

"You 've had some odd dreams," Jack answered.

"Yes, I 've been pretty sick. I know it. But see here, Jack! we did pawn or sell Scott and Burns and Byron and — What 's that on the mantel-piece? My flute! Why, I remember distinctly pawning that!"

"Yes, George," said Jack. "We pawned a good many things. But they have all come back to us. You see, we 've had a streak of luck."

"What luck?" said George, trying to raise himself, but finding no strength in his shrunken arms.

"You remember the pickpocket's ring, which you noticed had a brilliant diamond the first time you saw it, and had no diamond the next time? And where do you suppose that diamond was, all the while we were suffering the extremes of poverty? In my trousers-pocket, George!"

"No, no! That 's a romance, Jack!"

"No romance at all. Who would ever think of inventing such a thing for a story? It actually happened; and the way I discovered it, and sold it back to our friend the pickpocket, — *Mr. Manton's friend*, I mean, — is one of those things which people say are stranger than fiction. It 's all true, George; and with the money that rogue actually paid me I have redeemed all our pawned articles, bought back the books we sold, paid rent and board and washing and doctor's fees, and have more left for both of us than we started from home with. But see here, old fellow! you must n't go to being excited, or I sha' n't tell you anything more."

"No, don't tell me any more, — I can't stand it! I 'm glad I did n't send my letter to Vinnie — I did n't send it, did I? I can't remember."

"No, you did n't," replied Jack, thinking it discreet to withhold the real truth for a while.

"And yet," said George, "it seems to me I have been with Vinnie. I thought I was in the old room at home, and she was taking care of me, — and you were there too, Jack. Strange how things have been mixed up in my mind! Of course, we have n't been

there, Jack. And of course she has 'nt been here, — that 's more improbable still. But who has arranged this room so nicely? No direspect to you, Jack, but you never put things in *such* order, I know! Only a woman's hand could do this."

"Well, women have been here," said Jack. "Mrs. Dolberry has been very kind; and, George, we ought both to be ashamed of having ever made fun of her."

"What letter is that on the mantel-piece?" George inquired. "For me?"

"Yes, one that came yesterday."

"From Vinnie? No," said George, with a disappointed look, seeing the superscription. "Hallo! it 's from the 'Manhattan Magazine'! Read it, Jack! Quick!"

Jack opened the letter, and found that it contained a bank-note of five dollars, in payment for the poem, "An Autumn Day," printed in the "Manhattan Magazine." The heart of the poor young poet was filled with joy.

"My poem in the 'Manhattan'!" he exclaimed. "O Jack! I guess I am dreaming now. I never could see the editor; so, finally, I left a note for him; and this — "

He took the bank-note in his thin, feeble fingers, as if to make sure that it was a reality.

It was the first payment he had ever received for his verses; and never afterwards — not even when, not many years later, he was paid for such trifles ten times as much by magazines eager to secure contribu-

tions from his pen — did his success as a poet seem so certain, or its reward so sweet.

It was some time before Jack ventured to tell him any more news. But George, after a little rest, wished to know if "A Scene at the Wharves" had been heard from, and whether it was accepted.

"It has been accepted, printed, and paid for," replied Jack. "I have three dollars in my pocket, sent you by the editor, with his compliments, and an invitation to write him two such articles a week, describing city scenes; for which he will pay you six dollars a week."

"I can't believe it!" said George. "Why, Jack, my fame and fortune are made!"

"Not if you get excited, and are made worse by the news, George. I ought not to have told you so much. You must n't think of it any more; and you know it will be a long time before you can begin to write again."

"Yes, yes! But, O Jack! you have made me very happy. I owe that daily-paper business all to you. I should never have thought of writing up city scenes, if you had n't suggested the idea. And — have n't you accomplished anything for yourself yet?"

"Nothing to speak of. I 've just prepared an advertisement here, which I am going to let off, as a last resort. I put no confidence in it; for I have about made up my mind that I 've been wretchedly humbugged by somebody. I 'll tell you why I think so, some time; but you must rest now, and I have an

engagement to meet soon. Will you believe it? I am going to Brooklyn to take tea with our old friend of the steamboat, who loaned us the half-dollar."

"You must n't leave me alone, Jack! But no! I won't be selfish; go and enjoy yourself, and never mind me."

"I won't leave you alone, George; be sure of that. You shall have better company than I am."

"Better than you! That 's impossible, unless my dream should come true, and I should wake up and find — but that 's foolish! I 'll go to sleep, and see if I can't dream myself with her again."

"George," said Jack, earnestly, "don't be agitated, and I will tell you something. *You* did not send your letter to Vinnie, but *I* sent it, and wrote a few words to tell her that you were sick. And, George — "

"She is here! Vinnie!" cried George, faintly, as Jack's story was interrupted by the entrance of the young girl herself into the room.

She fluttered to the bedside like a bird; there were stifled cries, scarcely heard by Jack, as he ran out and left the two alone, — an example which we shall do well to follow.

But, while Jack is on his way to keep his engagement with the old sail-maker, we can glide softly back, and see Vinnie sitting by her "brother's" side, holding his hand, and smiling joyously upon him, while he questions her with his eyes and tongue.

"Now tell me how you got away — all about it," he entreats.

"Well, when I got your letter, with that first note from Jack (he tells me I must call him Jack), it made a great commotion at home."

"I can hear Uncle Presbit's '*I told him so!*'" says George; "and Aunt Presbit's '*He has made his bed, and he must lie on it.*'"

"There was enough of that, certainly," Vinnie replies. "But they are kinder hearted than you ever believed; you know I always insisted upon that. They scolded and blamed you, of course, at first; and I never said a word in your defence, — I knew that was the best way. I waited till their better feelings began to assert themselves, as I knew they would; and then, when Uncle Presbit said, 'Well, Vinnie, I suppose you 'll send off all your hard earnings to that foolish fellow,' I just replied that I had n't made up my mind.

"'Of course she will,' said Aunt Presbit. 'She never could refuse him anything he asked, from the time when we first brought them together. Now her money will go too, and that will be the last of that; then the first we know, he will be sending to us for more.'

"Then I spoke up. 'I don't think I shall send him any money,' I said. That took them both by surprise, and they began to change their tone. Uncle said he supposed, of course, I would send a little, — it was no more than right that I should; and he walked out of the house with the dissatisfied look you remember. Then aunt burst out.

"'Vinnie, I'm astonished at you!' she said. 'There's poor George, sick among strangers; no matter how foolish he has been, he's about the same to you as your own brother; and you ought to do everything for him you can. I shall send him some money, if you don't.' And she went to the green chest, and brought out that old stocking of hers you remember, — the stocking stuffed with the butter and eggs money, which uncle gives her."

"Did she?" says George, with glistening eyes. "I should n't have thought she would touch that money, for anybody."

"Hear the rest," Vinnie goes on. "She tumbled out the money on her bed, and was shedding tears over it, and pitying you, and scolding me, when at last I could keep in no longer, and I said: —

"'Aunt! George is sick, he may be dying! It is n't money alone he needs. I told you I should n't send him any. And I sha' n't. But I shall take all the money I have, and all you will lend or give me, and go to him, and stay with him, and take care of him, as long as he needs me.' Then you should have seen her look at me!

"'Now that sounds like you,' she said. 'And you are as good a hand at taking care of the sick as any girl of your age I ever knew.' But then she began to make objections; I was too young — I was a girl — the cost of the journey — and a hundred other things. All I replied was, 'George is sick among strangers; I can get to him some way, and I will.'

"Finally I obtained her consent. It was harder to get Uncle Presbit's; but I did n't wait for it; I just kept right on getting ready for the journey, and the next morning I started. He carried me over to the village, condemning my folly and telling me what to say and do for you, on the way. There I got Jack's second letter, which decided me to send back all aunt's money; that pleased uncle so much, that he at last appeared quite reconciled to my going. I made the journey without an accident; got out of an omnibus on the corner of Broadway, and asked of a young man in the street the way to the house, who turned out to be your friend Jack himself. O George! I seem to have been watched over by Providence through it all, and now that you are better, I think I can never be ungrateful again, or discontented with anything, in my life!"

"Teach me to feel that way, too, Vinnie!" says George, his heart melted with thankfulness and love. "You are so much better than I!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A REVELATION.

JACK found Mr. Plummerton waiting for him. The old man was in a thoughtful mood, and talked little, as they proceeded to the foot of Fulton Street, crossed over in a ferry-boat to Brooklyn, and then walked up one or two streets, till they came to a plain, comfortable wooden house, with PLUMMERTON on the door.

As they stopped before the old-fashioned, little wooden gate, they met two ladies,—one quite young, the other of middle age, both dressed in black,—coming from the opposite direction.

"Ah, Harriet!" said Mr. Plummerton, as they came up, "so late? I thought you would be here an hour ago. This is our young friend."

Jack had already recognized the kind woman whom he had first seen on the North River steamboat, and afterwards in Mrs. Libby's parlor. He now regarded her with a new and almost painful interest, knowing her to be Mr. Manton's wife.

She greeted him with a silent pressure of the hand, and a singularly tender, almost tearful smile; and then introduced him to her young companion with the hardly audible words, "My daughter."

The daughter smiled tranquilly, and gave him so

slight, so cold a nod, that Jack did not venture to do more than pull off his cap to her at a distance. Those still, gray eyes seemed to measure and read him at a glance. She could not have been older than himself, yet her perfect repose of manner suggested a woman thoroughly acquainted with the world; or was she not rather like a nun, too pure, too spiritual-minded to be moved by the world?

They went in; and Jack saw no more of the ladies until tea-time.

He met them at table, in company with old Mr. and Mrs. Plummerton, a widowed daughter of theirs, and her three children, who composed the family. Mrs. Manton and her daughter seemed to be neighbors, and familiar visitors, who (he inferred from some word that was dropped) had come in on that special occasion to meet him.

Something was said of the adventure on the steamboat; and from that Jack was led on to give a pretty complete history of himself.

He wondered very much how it happened that he was the centre of interest; and he was surprised to see, as he went on, that there was a tremor of feeling, a mist of emotion, even in the nun-like face and eyes of Miss Manton.

After tea, Mr. Plummerton took Jack into a little sitting-room, and carefully closed the door.

"The time has come," said he, "for a little serious talk. Sit down. You have asked me two or three times for the rest of the story, — about the Ragdon

child, — and I have put you off. Now I will tell you all I know to the purpose."

Jack drew a long breath. He could not help feeling that something of unusual interest was coming.

"In the first place, about Mrs. Manton and her daughter. They are the wife and daughter of the man you saw fined for drunkenness in the public court the other day, and whose fine I paid."

"It does n't seem possible!" exclaimed Jack. "Mrs. Manton is so good, so beautiful! and the daughter — she is white as snow! I know the father."

"Manton is not a bad man; he is not by nature a low or vicious man. But drink has besotted him, body and mind. This terrible misfortune has had a peculiar effect on his wife and daughter. Grace used to be one of the brightest, merriest children ever seen; and she has a warm heart and a quick wit still; but shame and suffering, in sympathy with her mother, on *his* account, have made her, in the presence of strangers, the kind of statue you see her."

"Are there other children?"

"None living. A son, older than Grace, died a year and a half ago. It was the remembrance of him, and perhaps a certain resemblance she fancied between him and you, that attracted Harriet to you on the steamboat."

"You were travelling in company with her, then?" Jack inquired.

"Yes; I had been to Albany on business, and she had been to see her husband's brother, who lives there, and who, through me, pays Manton's personal expenses. We wished to have some different arrangements made for him, — to give him some employment, and take him away from temptation; but the brother would n't hear of the plan; he says he has done all he can for Manton, and that he will now have no more trouble with him, except to give him a bare support."

"The bare support includes pretty good suits of clothes," said Jack.

"That comes from the brother's notions of family pride," replied the old man, with a smile. "The Mantons must be *gentlemen*, even when they are drunkards. But this is n't what I was going to say."

"You were going to tell me about — the Ragdon child."

"That child's mother and Mrs. Manton were sisters. I am their uncle."

The old man was going on to relate more particulars of the family, when Jack, at the first opportunity, interrupted him.

"The child and nurse were never heard from?"

"Yes. Six years after the disappearance, the nurse came back, and told a strange story. She was sick, and believed she was going to die, and wanted to relieve her mind by a confession. She did die, a few weeks after, having maintained the truth of her story to the last. Here is the printed account."

Mr. Plummerton took a small, rough-looking book from the shelf.

"When I turned to open my desk, but changed my mind, this morning, as you may remember, I was going to show you this scrap-book. It contains all the printed accounts of the affair, rewards offered, and so forth. But I thought you had better see it in my own house. Here is the nurse's story, briefly to this effect: that the going to Williamsburg that day was a pretence; that she really went to New York to pay a secret visit to her husband, and took the child with her; that, to induce her to go off with him, or to get her money, he gave her liquor to drink; and that, when she came to herself, the child was lost and could not be found."

Jack became suddenly very pale.

"How long ago?"

"Thirteen years ago, this coming month. The nurse, terrified at the loss of the child, which had been left to stray away through her neglect, — afraid to come back without it, and now completely under her husband's influence, — finally ran off with him, and was not heard of, as I said, for six years."

"What part of New York?"

"She could n't remember the name of the street where she met her husband; but it was not very far up town, and it was between Broadway and the river."

Then Jack inquired, "How was the child dressed?"

The old man answered, "Very much as you say

you were dressed, when you were picked up. Here is the full description, in the printed offers of rewards, only we have 'golden curls,' instead of 'yellow curls,' and 'fine pink and white checks,' instead of plain 'pink,' gives the color of the frock."

Jack held the book in the sunset light, which shone through the window, and read the announcement which he had looked for in the New York papers so long in vain, and which must have escaped his eye because it appeared in them under the head of "Affairs in Brooklyn."

CHAPTER XL.

JACK'S RELATIVES.

His breath almost stifled with emotion, his eyes shining, Jack laid down the book and looked at Mr. Plummerton. The old man continued, with singular calmness of look and tone: —

"None of us has any doubt but you are the true Henry Ragdon. Mrs. Manton is your aunt; Grace is your cousin. This relationship accounts for a certain resemblance you bear to the son who died, — which was not all in Harriet's fancy."

"Mrs. Ragdon — my mother — is dead?" said Jack. "And my father?"

"Your father was at that time in business with his brother-in-law, Manton. Manton ruins everything he touches. He ruined your father. The failure came close upon the heels of the other terrible affair. It's a distressing story altogether; I won't dwell upon it. Your father was one of the most active, upright, earnest men I ever saw. Overwork and anxiety of mind brought on a fever, and he died the next December. Your mother never recovered from this double calamity; yet she survived her husband about four years."

Jack made no reply. His face was buried in

his hands. After a pause, Mr. Plummerton went on: —

"You will be interested to know what property was left. Your father, owing to his failure, left nothing. But your mother had a little in her own right, which he would never touch, — and wisely, as it proved. It was something less than a thousand dollars; yet it was all she had to live on, after he died. Harriet had as much of her own, but Manton squandered every dollar of it. After Harriet was separated from her husband, she and your mother lived together, and shared everything in common, even to the care of the children. What is left of the little property, Harriet still has, and it is all she has. Your mother left it in her hands, without a will, knowing her necessities, and knowing, too, that if the lost child was ever found, Harriet would do what was right by him. Now would you like to see your aunt and cousin?"

"Pretty soon — not just yet," Jack murmured, his face still hidden, and his bent frame agitated.

Mr. Plummerton went out; and presently Mrs. Manton came in, sat down by Jack's side, took his hand, and with an arm placed gently and affectionately about him, drew him towards her, until his head rested, childlike, upon her motherly shoulder. This was more than he could endure, and he sobbed aloud.

She was also deeply moved. But after a time she grew calm, and then she talked to him long and lov-



JACK AND HIS RELATIVES.

ingly of his parents, especially of his mother, of his own childhood, and of many things which cannot be recounted here.

Once Jack became conscious of the presence of Grace, and looking up, he saw her sitting just before

him, erect and pale, with tears sliding softly down her still face.

When all had become more composed, Mrs. Manton said: —

"And now with regard to your mother's little property, of which I suppose uncle has told you something. It had shrunken considerably at the time she died; but I have kept as correct an account of it as I could; and as soon as uncle came over at noon and told us of you, I set Grace to reckoning up the interest. She has the paper here. You will see by it that we owe you eleven hundred dollars. We shall not be able to pay all of it at once, but we can pay a part of it in a few days, and then, little by little, make up the rest. She is beginning to give music-lessons now, and is quite successful; and it costs us not very much to live."

Jack glanced at the paper, by the light of a lamp which had been brought in; then hung his head, with a look of deep trouble, which Mrs. Manton mistook for disappointment.

"You will think that you have gained but little by hunting up your parentage," she said sadly.

Jack dropped the paper, and accidentally put his foot upon it as he rose.

"I can't tell you how much I have gained!" he exclaimed, with the eloquence of strong feeling. "To know what you have just told me of my parents, is worth everything! As for this little property, my dear aunt! my dear cousin!" — he held the

hands of both, — "don't for a moment think that I will ever take a cent of it! It 's where I know my mother would wish to have it; I do not need it; never speak of it again!"

In vain they urged him. He would not even listen to their thanks. His heart was full. If not altogether happy, he felt that he was deeply blessed; and that all the fortunes in the world could not at that moment make him richer.

They urged him to remain, and make them a visit; then wished to know if there was anything they could do for him.

"Not for me. In a few days I am going back to my country home, where I shall work and study, and want for nothing. But I shall have a friend here in the city. He will be lonely without me. If you will be kind to him and let him visit you, — and if you will sing and play to him, Cousin Grace, for he is very fond of music, — that will make me feel better about leaving him."

Jack promised, however, to come often to Brooklyn, and to bring his friend with him once, if possible, before leaving New York.

Then, parting with Grace and her mother at their own door, he hurried to the ferry, and recrossed the river; his heart throbbing with deep emotion and exalted thoughts as he looked down at the rushing water and up at the silent stars.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE LAST.

With Jack's accomplishment of the object of his journey, and George's restoration to health, our story of these fast friends draws to a close; for the time of their separation was now at hand.

Whilst awaiting George's convalescence, Jack — for we will still call him by his familiar name — went round one day to Murray Street, hoping to have one more talk with his old friend, Master Felix. But neither Master Felix nor Professor De Waldo was to be found, the pair having lately decamped, as the landlord expressed it, between two days. Why they had taken this course, just as they were having a good run of custom, he could not explain, but conjectured that it was for the simple pleasure of cheating him out of his rent.

The friends had some difficulty in dividing satisfactorily what they called their "diamond money"; not because each claimed more than his just share, but for a quite contrary reason. After each had taken all that he thought belonged to him, there remained a handsome little sum which both sturdily refused. The difficulty was growing serious, when Jack suggested, as a happy compromise, a present for

Vinnie. "What should it be?" was the question. George said she had long wanted a silk dress, but that his uncle and aunt had frowned upon the mere mention of such extravagance. As they could not well object to her receiving it as a present, the silk was secretly resolved upon.

Jack paid several visits to his Brooklyn friends; and on one occasion invited his aunt and cousin to go shopping with him. He wished to be guided by their feminine taste and judgment in selecting the silk, and also in choosing some suitable gifts for Mrs. Dolberry, and for Mrs. Chatford and little Kate at home.

That evening the friends had the satisfaction of delivering their present, and of witnessing a young girl's innocent delight over her "first silk." There was but one drawback to Vinnie's perfect contentment: she had no new hat to wear with the new gown!

But somehow the hat and other needful accompaniments were duly added, while the gown was in the hands of a dressmaker recommended by good Mrs. Dolberry; and on a certain memorable occasion Vinnie "came out."

George also, on that occasion, appeared in a new suit, bought a day or two before at a ready-made clothing shop. As for Jack, he just brushed up his old clothes as well as he could, and made them answer. He was anxious that his friends should that day make a good appearance: he cared less for him-

self. It was Sunday, and all three were going over to take dinner in Brooklyn, and spend the afternoon with Mrs. Manton and Grace.

It proved a delightful occasion for all; but it was especially so to George. In his languid, convalescent state, his heart was open to all sweet influences; and the beauty of the day, the sunshine and breeze and dancing ripples on the river, the presence and sympathy of his two dear friends, and the exceeding kindness of the new friends he was destined that day to make, — everything contributed to brim his heart with happiness.

It was perhaps owing to this susceptibility of the invalid, that Grace made the deep impression on him which his friends observed. The sight of her affected him like the reading of a perfect poem, and the tones of her voice moved him like strange music. He did not find her cold, as Jack at first did; but her very looks and words seemed, to his sensitive soul, always just ready to quiver with emotions unexpressed.

The afternoon was enlivened by the unlooked-for appearance of Mr. Manton. He covered his surprise at seeing his young friends with a great deal of politeness; and, alluding to the story of the diamond, which had reached him, declared that he was "disappointed in that MacPheeler." But he was happy to say that the light-fingered gentleman had recently got his deserts; having been taken in the very act of picking a pocket, and shut up in the Tombs, where he was now awaiting his trial.

Manton made but a short call; but it was long enough to give the other visitors a new insight into the characters of Grace and her mother. While they had not the heart to laugh at his pleasantries, they treated him with a certain tender respect, which — to George particularly — seemed very beautiful. He had much to say about the trouble Jack would have saved himself by confiding to him, at the outset, the object of his business in the city; but, finding that he had the talk mostly to himself, he presently, with many polite flourishes, took his leave.

Vinnie, fresh and vivacious, broke through the reserve even of the quiet Grace, and gained her lasting friendship; though they were not to meet again for many years.

In the pleasant summer twilight, Grace and her mother accompanied their visitors to the ferry, and took leave of them there. To Jack and Vinnie, who were to start the next day on their homeward journey, they gave affectionate good-by kisses; to George, invitations to visit them again.

It was these new friendships he had made which consoled George for the prospect of so soon parting with Jack and Vinnie and seeing them set off on their journey without him, — a trial which had before seemed more than he could bear.

It seemed *all* he could bear, when the time came. I don't know why Jack bore the parting more bravely; perhaps because his present strength and natural self-control were greater; perhaps because Vinnie went with him.

The farewells were spoken at the door; and there George stood and watched the coach that carried them away, and listened to the receding rattle of the wheels, until it turned a corner, and he saw and heard no more. Then climbing slowly to his room, he locked the door, threw himself upon his now lonely bed, and cried like a child.

The parting of friends, either by death or absence or estrangement, is, assuredly, one of the very saddest things in life. Almost every other sorrow can be met with patience. But time brings consolation even for this.

Time brought consolation to George; yet neither new friends, nor literary success (which came with hard toil and frugal living), nor any good fortune or happiness, ever crowded from his heart the love and gratitude he felt for Jack.

And Jack was no less faithful in his attachment. Yet the journey up the river and the canal, as far as Vinnie's home, was to him — strange as it may seem — one of the happiest incidents of his whole life. He wished that it might never end. The weather was lovely; and he and Vinnie sat on the deck of the packet-boat, or in the cool cabin, day and evening, and talked about George, New York, the past, the future, — everything but the present moments, which made them so happy, and which were going, never to return.

Vinnie wished Jack to stop and visit George's relatives; but he was a little ashamed of giving himself

up to dreams and leisure, as he was now doing, and felt that he must hasten home to work on the farm, which, after all, he loved so well.

The evening before they were to part, as they sat on the deck, gliding by moonlight through pleasant scenes, Vinnie said to him: —

"Why is it that George never talked to me as you do? Even that morning when he bid me good by, just as he was starting for New York, he seemed thinking of something else."

Though Jack had long since made up his mind that George, with all his brotherly affection, never appreciated Vinnie as *he* would have done in his place, he did not say so, but answered, half playfully: —

"Still, when he has succeeded in New York, I suspect he will have something very confidential to say to you."

"Oh!" laughed Vinnie, "I know what you mean. But you are very much mistaken. Why, do you know, I have fully made up my mind that — "

"That what?"

"That he will marry Grace Manton. Yes, I am sure of it. She 's just suited for him; and did n't you notice how he interested her? What a poetical face she has! And then, you know, fond as George and I have always been of each other, we are only brother and sister."

"If I could think so!" Then, after a little pause, Jack added fervently, "I am only a boy now; but in

a few years I shall be a man; and in the mean while I am going to make something of myself, if study and hard work will do it. I won't ask you *now* to give me any serious promise; only that we, too, may be FAST FRIENDS till *then*."

"Till then, and always," Vinnie answered frankly.

THE END.

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